POPULAR PREACHING

DINSDALE T. YOUNG, D.D.

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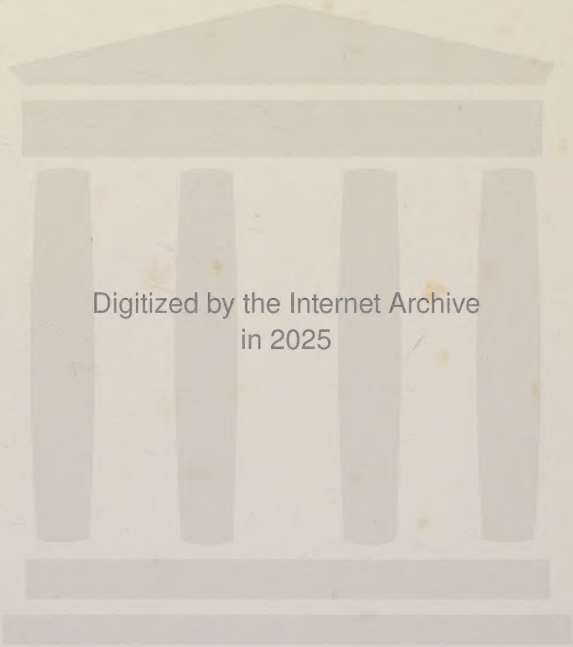

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POPULAR PREACHING

By

DINSDALE T. YOUNG, D.D.

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I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK,

AS I HAVE DEDICATED TWO
PREVIOUS BOOKS,

TO MY BELOVED WIFE

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POPULAR PREACHING

Chapter I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POPULAR PREACHING

What do we mean by ' Popular Preaching ' ? It is not easy to define even terms which we understand. Some say that we can always explain what we comprehend. But this is by no means so, and confirmatory illustrations might easily be adduced.

I would venture to describe ' Popular Preaching ' as preaching which is acceptable to people in general. ' The common people ' is a scriptural expression, and it has passed into everyday usage, but it is often misapplied in our day. It really connotes all sorts and conditions of people, but it is frequently used to signify one particular order of people. This is truly a great abuse of the term. Indeed, the term ' the people ' has suffered a similar regrettable contraction of meaning. Strictly ' the people ' means all orders of people : rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, young and old.

I use the expression ' Popular Preaching,' in this lecture, in what I conceive to be its only

legitimate sense. Popular Preaching is such as gains the ear and commands the attention of people of every order and class. It might be avowed that, given this definition, there has seldom, or never, been any Popular Preaching. And, if the phrase is used in its most rigorous and absolute sense, such a criticism would be philosophically justifiable. But we all understand that the term is used, not absolutely, but relatively.

Archbishop Magee used to say that there are three classes of sermons: sermons you cannot listen to, sermons you can listen to, and sermons which you cannot help listening to. Perhaps we might take as a working definition of Popular Preaching that it is such preaching as the people in general cannot help listening to.

Popular Preaching is an ordinance of God. And a royal ordinance it has demonstrated itself to be. It is, by the ordination of God, the chief instrumentality for the salvation of the world. I make bold to say that it is the supreme sacrament of the Church of God. There is no means of grace which has yielded such royal dainties to the soul. In the New Testament there are two foremost forces for the conversion and sanctification of mankind: they are Popular Preaching and Popular Testimony. The evangelical Churches have conquered, where they have conquered, by those weapons. In the Methodist Revival these

were the weapons of warfare by which glorious victories were won for the Redeemer of the world. A revival of the utilization of these incomparable weapons would mean the recurrence of such splendid triumphs.

What a world-long history, and what a magnificent history, Popular Preaching has had! I say world-long because Holy Scripture discloses such a wonderful duration. It began in the Garden of Eden, and it continues to this day. God Himself is the first in the shining host of such preachers. In the glades of Paradise the Protevangelium sounded forth. Gospel preaching followed in gracious swiftness upon the fall of man, like dulcet music after a dreadful thunderstorm. The Old Testament is a history of Popular Preaching. Malachi completes the music which the Almighty first discoursed. When we read the New Testament we find it to be resonant with the same music, but enhanced into a melodiousness richer far. Our Lord Jesus Christ was foreordained of the Father to be such a preacher that ' never man spake like this man.' All through the evangelical centuries the goodly fellowship of gospel preachers praised Him. The Christian Church has, in its noblest epochs, been always conspicuous for its Popular Preaching. The great revivals of Christian history have either originated in such preaching or have inspired it. The brightest eras of

Romanism have won their brightness by such preaching, and we would, as Protestants, have good hope of it if it were to emerge from its mazes of ceremonialism and re-adopt the agency of preaching, so moulding its future according to the most illustrious chapters of its past.

Protestantism has always, in its royalist days, won its way by Popular Preaching. The decline of this is always a prophecy of the decline of Protestantism. This is the historic and victorious sword of which every true Protestant says, ' There is none like it.' The primal Protestants of British history were heroes of the people's pulpit. The Protestant Reformation was essentially accomplished by Popular Preaching, reinforced by a glorious outburst of evangelical song. The Puritan revival was, again, a mighty demonstration of the power of Popular Preaching. John Bunyan, Thomas Goodwin, John Howe, Richard Baxter, Richard Gibbes, are illustrative names of that wonderful Puritan pulpit which was, both intellectually and popularly, the most wonderful pulpit Britain has ever known.

The Methodist Revival is obviously an outstanding illustration of our argument. It was a dramatic evidence of the power of Popular Preaching. Of this we purpose to speak in some detail presently. Meanwhile let this be impressed upon us—that, whilst other media had happy and

successful place in that wonderful movement, such as personal testimony and ringing gospel song, yet Popular Preaching was its regnant potency. Whitefield and the Wesleys, and their brave coadjutors and devoted successors, were marshalled in the radiant host of the Popular Preachers.

The best subsequent eras of the Churches have been eras when this same force prevailed. However we may deprecate certain features of the Tractarian Revival, and legitimately and necessarily deprecate them, and however we may dissent from the notion that it continued and completed the Methodist Revival, we are, I think, bound to recognize that it brought into renewed prominence the sacred usage of Popular Preaching. The Tractarian Revival began, as John Henry Newman asserted, in Popular Preaching. John Keble's famous Oxford sermon was the norm out of which it sprang. It produced numerous Popular Preachers of a distinctly high order. The names of Keble, Newman, Pusey, Rose, and many another shone out like stars in the history of that movement. And the later history of that movement down to to-day, has been in harmony with the original feature. Liddon, George Body, Knox Little, Newbolt, and many another have splendidly reinforced the personalities of the popular pulpit of Tractarianism.

Methodism has shone out most gloriously when its Popular Preaching has been most in evidence. It took its inception in this element, and in its native element it flourishes as a fruitful tree. Its greatest evolutions have been, not its elaborate organization, not its colossal raising of funds, not its social influence, not its consolidated wealth, but its Popular Preaching. Like its divine Master and Lord, its greatest human characteristic has been that 'the common people heard it gladly.' If there has been any measure of truth in what has been said, then it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the high significance of Popular Preaching. If it be so scriptural, so pre-eminently Christian, so apostolic, so historically influential, then a study of it in various aspects must be, by the blessing of God, of golden remuneration.

Preaching in itself may be but a feeble agency. But, thrilled with the light and heat of the Holy Spirit, and used only for the glory of God in Christ, and bent only to one issue, it becomes the mightiest force in the universe. It is the conquering secret of the advance of Christianity. 'It pleased God, by the foolishness which is the subject-matter of Christianity—"Christ crucified"—to save them that believe.' Verily this consecrated method is a marvel—a marvel so marvellous that it can only have originated in the mind of Jehovah. Its uniqueness evidences its divine

origin. And it has wonderfully answered its divine purpose! Allowing, frankly and persistently, that man has all too often abused the sublime agency, yet what other instrumentality has wrought such wonders upon mankind? This ram's horn has levelled Jerichoes which have defied the loud sounding of silver trumpets.

Souls of men have been regenerated in myriads. Empires have been purified. A great and truly Catholic Church has been upbuilt. The human intellect has been pervaded with 'thoughts that wander through eternity.' To multitudes a hope has sprung up in the breast which has been indeed a 'living hope,' and it has borne them up amid floods and flames. The faith they have received has made life abundantly worth living, and death yet more abundantly worth dying. It has moulded corrupt sinners into the likeness of the sinless Son of God. In a word, it has won intellectual, moral, social, political victories in presence of which all other conquerors are unlaurelled and abashed.

What a solitary splendour has Popular Preaching won! Its peculiarly Christian quality has been triumphantly vindicated. Heathenism has no preachers. Science and philosophy have no preachers. No other system has ever essayed to win its way by such a method. This unexampled agency has won unexampled success.

It is among the evidences of the divinity of Christianity that thus and so it has, like a sunburst, irradiated the world. Think of it! A divine Kingdom established in an undivine world by consecrated speech! A tongue of fire the most potent factor in history! The tongue—feebleness itself of itself. But the fire—descended from heaven, and therefore 'mighty through God'! Let all the studies of 'comparative religion' be challenged to produce a parallel to this amazing fact!

This being true, there is no duty so urgently incumbent upon the Churches of to-day as to maintain, refurbish, and, 'in the Holy Ghost,' seek ever to augment the instrumentality of Popular Preaching. If this force decline, evangelical religion will decline, the Churches will wither, the souls of men will perish, and society will be honeycombed with evil; nay, even civilization itself will decay. These claims are strong, but not adequately strong to represent the tragic possible situation. It is ardently to be desired that the confidence of the Churches in 'the royal ordinance of preaching' should be adamantine. Preachers can hardly magnify their office too strenuously. The people can scarcely overestimate their privilege and their responsibility in having such an ordinance for their eternal salvation. Especially are the Methodist people

called, by their history and by their commission, to establish the pulpit as 'the most important guard, support, and ornament of virtue's cause.'

I forbear to determine whether preachers or hearers have a mightier responsibility in this momentous matter. The 'counsel of God' alone can determine it. The allotment is one of the 'secret things' which 'belong unto the Lord.' But assuredly both have a responsibility which is not trivial, but simply tremendous, till both may alike cry, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

'Him that heareth' in these days must 'say, Come,' with a solemn and resonant enthusiasm. Much of the decline in Church attendance is to be ascribed to an apathy concerning the preaching of the Word among modern Christians. Did we realize the terrible needs of the souls of men, it would be our unremitting labour to bring them under the sound of the gospel. We should approximate to the New Testament in our intense appreciation of preaching. It uses five different words to describe this God-commanded agency. Above a hundred times it alludes to the agency. It sets forth with burning and startling emphasis what eternal issues depend upon it. It declares that they who treat it as foolishness are 'perishing'; and who can fathom the depths of woe which that word suggests? It avows that they who accept it are 'being saved'—have a

sovereign and glorious experience of its being ' the power of God.'

I fixedly and deeply believe that in the long run the Churches will stand or fall by Popular Preaching. Nothing can compensate for its decadence. Nothing can eclipse its grace and glory. The Churches have always been tempted—and they are more tempted to-day than ever—to rely upon other agencies. But, apart from Popular Preaching, they rely upon a reed which will pierce them, if they put confidence in other forces. We may organize till organization and its sustentation become a crushing burden. We may make financial appeals till we nauseate our supporters. We may provide amusements till our solicited clients turn ungratefully away from us to other caterers. We may project all sorts of useful adjuncts into supreme prominence in the Church, but, like all usurpers, their reign will be pitifully impermanent. Then let the people of our Churches swear new fealty to the sovereignty of preaching. Let us encourage preachers to preach. Let us seek to prevent them from being diverted from their palmary task. A generation of eager hearers who pant for salvation would create a generation of influential preachers who burn for the salvation of the people. The people largely make the preacher. ' Like people, like priest,' is the Old Testament law, and it is unabrogated in

Christian times. 'How hearest thou?' is an ever up-to-date question. Let each hearer ply himself with this inquiry, and let all hearers ply one another with it too. And the responsive Lord will give the Word, and great shall be the company of the preachers.

I would fain, in fraternal love, call all preachers to the noble service of preaching to the people. Dr. Dale greatly deplored, in his closing years, that he had been so afraid of making his preaching popular. Meretricious popularity is anathema; God and all right-minded men stand upon Ebal and condemn it. But a Christ-like and apostle-like popularity is essential to all soul-saving and soul-sanctifying preaching. Dr. Alexander Whyte powerfully warned young preachers against a pseudo-intellectuality which leads to the despisal of Popular Preaching. And reiterated warning is needed to-day.

Two great menaces frown upon Popular Preaching in our day. Ultra-ritualism is the first. It exalts what it describes as 'the altar,' and depreciates the pulpit. It has no right to the use of the term 'altar.' There is no place for an 'altar' in evangelical Churches. And the plea that the pulpit should be superseded by ceremonialism is refuted by Christian history. Nothing is barrener of spiritual results than a series of ceremonies without the teaching of the pulpit.

Nor is any plea more sophistical than the plea that ' We go to church to worship and not to hear preaching.' This creates an antithesis which should never be constituted by Christian people. To listen with mind and heart and prayer to Gospel Preaching is to offer the noblest and most recompensive worship which the sanctuary can know. Beware of any ritual which would throw preaching into the shade ! Christian preachers are not priests—the New Testament gives no sanction to such a conception. Our great function is preaching the gospel.

The other formidable opponent of Popular Preaching is ultra-organization. This is the severest menace of the people's pulpit in the Free Churches, and in Methodism in particular. Organization is, of course, essential. But its excess is as grievous in its results as is the excess of ritualism. The love of Church business may easily beguile the soul of a preacher. When this is so, the preacher becomes secularized. When a committee is to a preacher a little heaven below, he is in serious peril. When he is remarked on as rather a business man than a preacher, he is in sad disrepute—unless in being so described he is foully slandered. We must prune organization if the pulpit is to flourish. The preacher is ' a herald,' according to the New Testament. Let the mystic separatedness unto the Gospel be a

mark of all who fill the preacher's awful yet glorious office.

Be it added that such preaching as I have been endeavouring to characterize is as attractive to-day as in days past. The evidence of this is easily discerned if we survey the Churches. I say it with all reverence—God foreknew the abiding popularity of preaching when He made it His good pleasure to decree it as the chief instrument of man's salvation. Cultured and ignorant, young and old, rich and poor, respond to Popular Preaching. It is not because we have too much of it that churches are so depleted, but because we have all too little of it. 'Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will thrust forth more labourers into His vineyard.' Methodist people, pray for a revival, deep and enduring, of the ancestral Popular Preaching of the people called Methodists. And, as God is in His heaven, your prayer shall be heard, and He will bless our nation with a great crowd of preachers who 'all the sinful race point to the all-atoning blood.'

I would specially plead with my younger brethren to give themselves with ever-renewed ardour to this soul-saving work. Preach to all sorts and conditions of people 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' Warn every man, and teach every man that ye may 'present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' Sow the seed, which is

'the Word' everywhere and always—alike in morning brightness and in evening shade—and it shall assuredly prosper in that whereunto God sent it.

What a lovely picture of a Popular Preacher is limned in these words which a sister wrote on hearing that noble preacher, Dr. Elmslie, give his gospel message :

He held the lamp of Truth that day
So low that none could miss the way,
And yet so high to bring in sight
That picture fair, the world's great Light,
That, gazing up—the lamp between—
The hand that held it scarce was seen !

He held the pitcher, stooping low,
To lips of little ones below,
Then raised it to the weary saint,
And bade him drink when sick and faint.
They drank—the pitcher thus between,
The hand that held it scarce was seen !

He blew the trumpet soft and clear,
That trembling sinners need not fear,
And then with louder note and bold,
To raze the walls of Satan's hold,
The trumpet coming thus between,
The hand that held it scarce was seen !

But when the Captain says, 'well done,
Thou good and faithful servant, come !
Lay down the trumpet, leave the camp,'
The weary hands will then be seen
Clasped in those pierced ones, naught between.

Chapter II

THE DEPRECIATION OF POPULAR PREACHING

Popular Preaching has been severely depreciated; probably never more fiercely than it is in some quarters to-day. This is a circumstance which all reasonable and reflective people are bound to reckon with. Be it frankly and sorrowfully acknowledged that sometimes such depreciation has been righteously merited. A certain order of Popular Preaching must be detested by all who love the great salvation, and love the souls of men, and ever see the great white throne.

Popular Preaching's foes have often been those of its own household. None can cast such ill odium upon preaching as preachers can. None can so fatally bring down the pulpit as they can who abuse it instead of using it. Alas that it should have to be admitted that there has been a so-called Popular Preaching which has been a guilty travesty of the true Popular Preaching. It cannot be wondered at that such a prostitution of a noble institution has led many to depreciate the institution itself.

There has been a Popular Preaching which has won its limited and miserable popularity by the suppression of the gospel, or by the denial of the faith which was ' once for all delivered unto the saints.' Let such Popular Preaching have thunderous anathemas rolled upon it. It has sold the truth to serve the hour. It has denied the Lord who bought us whilst its perpetrator wore the livery of His service. No marvel it has evoked the holy scorn of all who are loyal to the Saviour. But it has unfortunately often produced a reaction against the institution which it so grossly abused. This is to fail to distinguish between gold and dross, between the precious and the vile.

There has been a Popular Preaching which has discarded all teaching of the truth. It has mocked at doctrine. It has uttered its inanities as if no Word of God existed. Its vapid utterances have held no good for mind or soul. Instead of a prophet in the pulpit there has been a mere word-spinner. There might be no vast eternity, so have the futilities of time absorbed the attention of the preacher. Again, no marvel that serious souls have resented such Popular Preaching ; they would have been criminal had they not resented it. But again, the unfortunate fact has emerged that it has often led to a prejudice against Popular Preaching of all kinds. This shows a warped judgement. Pretentious tinsel should not prejudice

against solid gold. And that there may be golden Popular Preaching who can deny who knows the history of the pulpit?

There has been a Popular Preaching which has been utterly devoid of intellectual quality. It has been evacuated of all thought-provoking matter. Light and empty it has indeed been. The disappointed hearer who hoped at least for some thoughts to live upon has rightly cried, 'Vanity of vanities—all is vanity.' The 'preacher' said that of old; the hearer says it now in presence of such a perversion of preaching. The 'preacher' said it in the ancient days of the universe; now the hearer says it, with abundant warrant of the pulpit itself. And, again, such Popular Preaching has caused a loathing distaste for *all* Popular Preaching. This is as easily understood as it is deeply to be regretted.

There has been a Popular Preaching which has been sheer sensationalism. Sensation we all approve, if it be of the right sort—if it be inspired by real zeal and deep conviction. We could desire more of the true sensationalism in many pulpits. Stagnation is no more essentially holy than is sensationalism. But the sensationalism which gives the earnest hearer the impression that it is an end in itself cannot be reprobated too severely. It may deceive the unenlightened, but the illumined soul—and there are many such among the

populace—inevitably detects its quality. To try to make fools stare! To make fools laugh! To create the impression of a conjurer's cleverness! Verily Popular Preaching of this order is a gross offence to the sanctuary, and a grosser offence to the Holy Lord of the sanctuary. Again, no marvel that such Popular Preaching has provoked a contempt for *all* Popular Preaching. The cap and bells in the pulpit is an unendurable outrage, and the effect has too often been to prejudice good people against what is, in itself, a noble agency—the function of Popular Preaching.

There has been another perversion of Popular Preaching—that which has resolved itself into the telling of an infinite variety of anecdotes, many of them of doubtful lineage and many of them having had no foundation in fact. An anecdote in the pulpit may be as a welcome window which lets in the light of God, but an anecdote may be a thickly woven blind which effectually prevents the inflow of the light. And when preaching is nothing but a shapeless mass of anecdotes, how fatuous it is! Anecdotage, if it be the substance of preaching, makes the preaching a phantom-substance.

To mention one of the unfortunate types of Popular Preaching which is responsible for the prejudice against Popular Preaching, there has been that preaching, the outstanding characteristic

of which has been its unpardonable vulgarity. Coarseness is never so odious as in the pulpit. Voluntary and studied vulgarity, vulgarity aimed at as likely to be popular—what language is fiery enough to characterize it. It is an insult to all delicate-minded hearers. It is an insult to the very spirit of the gospel, which is ' like a refiner's fire.' It is an insult to the Pulpit. I need hardly say how fatally *such* Popular Preaching has tended to prejudice refined hearers—and there are numerous refined hearers in all the social orders—against the God-established institution of Popular Preaching.

So I have striven to account for what may be described as a legitimate prejudice against Popular Preaching. In the last analysis I think it could be shown that such prejudice is unreasonable. It confuses the counterfeit with the real. But it is to be recognized as having some legitimacy. At any rate, we can find salient excuse for it. We deplore it, but we still more deplore that which has occasioned it. It is dreadful to be a pulpit hireling, and one of the most deplorable issues of such hirelinghood is that it prejudices people against the methods of true shepherdliness.

Let all preachers well remember that the reputation of the pulpit is largely in their hands, and, more than its reputation, the usefulness, the soul-saving power, the Christ-honouring

power of the pulpit is committed to their trust. 'Who is sufficient for these things?' well may the earnest preacher cry in holy alarm. Happily, the ancient answer is the glorious and enheartening answer of this day of grace—'Our sufficiency is of God.' Preachers, let your hearts resound with that empowering realization!

Having sought to indicate what I believe to be a not wholly unworthy prejudice against Popular Preaching, I now proceed to set forth a common prejudice against Popular Preaching which I believe to be absolutely wrong: first, midst, and last. The judgement must begin at the pulpit. In the generations of the preachers there has often been an invincible prejudice against Popular Preaching. It has often arisen from a higher intellectuality. It has been thought to be unworthy of a preacher with a massive mentality. Sometimes the massive mentality has been a fiction of the particular preacher's imagination. He has 'seen the shadow of the mountains as if they had been men.' Bluntly, it has sometimes been the offspring of conceit, and observers who have had insight have pathetically exclaimed, 'This also is vanity.' Will my younger brethren bear with my saying that such an attitude to Popular Preaching is an offence against our congregations? It is a refusal to communicate the truth to the people in a form which makes it effectual in them. It is wronging

their souls. The truth must be uttered in a manner adapted to the people's comprehension.

I gladly admit that sometimes where a preacher shuns the popular the motive may be good, but the effect is evil. Moreover, when analysed, there may be unconscious selfishness underlying the proceeding, and an unconscious slothfulness. A selfishness, because the preacher is enamoured of the intellectual, and, knowing that many of the people are not, he yet persists to indulge his own preference, to the sacrificing of the good of the people. It is a case of egoism quenching altruism. And it may represent slothfulness too ; it may be that, with his intellectual temperament, he refuses to make the effort to be understanded of the common people. He is really a ' slothful servant,' though he did not discover himself to be such. A cross is laid upon every true preacher, and with some it is an intellectual cross. Let none shun that cross when it ought to be taken up.

Happily in our own Churches, and in all Churches, there have been shining examples of preachers who have fought against, and splendidly conquered such prejudice as I have been attempting to delineate. Nobly dowered men, with grand intellectual powers, have crucified their personal preference in order to instruct and to save the people. Dr. Adam Clarke is a far-shining example in the early days of Methodism. John Wesley is

the father of all such noble heralds of the Cross in the Methodist pulpit. The time would fail me to tell of the goodly and numerous company. I may be permitted to instance one in these later years, all too early taken from us—Dr. J. Hope Moulton. He wore his weight of learning like a flower ; he scorned selfishly to immerse himself in learning ; he delighted to utter the gospel so that he that occupied the room of the unlearned could say, ' Amen.' And we rejoice that there are many beautiful examples of the same love for souls inspiring to Popular Preaching. We cannot hold such in too high reputation and in too appreciative affection.

My sword is unsheathed against the ape of intellectuality when he desecrates the pulpit by ascending it ; who speaks contemptuously of the people, and boasts that he addresses the cultured few—it is certainly the few. Such girding at the function of Popular Preaching is as spiritually wrong as it is contemptible. It assuredly grieves and wounds Him who was ' chosen out of the people,' and it cannot be too intensely denounced. In faithfulness it must be added very frankly that a preacher has been known to gibe at Popular Preaching because he had proved himself incapable of it. There have been pulpit foxes who have persistently declared that the grapes were sour, and for the identical reason which led the fox in

Aesop's fable to make the same affirmation. 'Pessimism,' says George Meredith, is 'disappointed egoism.' There is profound suggestiveness in that pithy definition. But let a veil be cast over that tragedy of the pulpit, and let all preachers say, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secret, and to their assembly be thou not united.'

In bygone years—I sincerely believe there is little, if anything, of it to-day—the theological colleges were not without blame in regard to the fostering of the prejudice against Popular Preaching. Dr. Marcus Dods, an ardent friend of learning and a lover of Popular Preaching, though, as he confessed, incapable of it himself, remarked that in his student days in Scotland there was an irrational prejudice against Popular Preaching, and he never ceased to deplore the lasting ill-effects it had produced upon the Presbyterian pulpit of Scotland. Dr. Dods owned that, in his college years, if a man had much thought he was honoured, but if he knew how to express it effectively he was regarded as shallow. A similar preposterous prejudice obtained within the recollection of many of us.

Again, I delight to believe that this prejudice, fatal to pulpit effectiveness, has died away out of our theological colleges, and quite a different spirit prevails therein. The influence of Dr. John Dury Geden, a jubilee of years ago, told happily

in this direction. So did the influence of the Rev. F. W. Macdonald. So emphatically did the influence of that ideal principal of a ministerial college, Benjamin Hellier. He taught his students to shun a meretricious popularity, but he continually taught them to seek the true popularity of seeking to present the glorious gospel in an attractive and effective style. In this he was charmingly sustained by his learned and saintly and lovable colleague, Dr. G. G. Findlay, who never missed an opportunity of encouraging all who sought, for Christ's sake, to commend the gospel to the general heart of man.

Having endeavoured to examine the reasons for the prejudice against Popular Preaching from the standpoint of the preacher, I will now endeavour to look at that same prejudice from the standpoint of the people. The prejudice against Popular Preaching has never been confined to preachers ; it has percolated through the varied company of the hearers. And here again the prejudice has been multifold. Sometimes it has been all but, if not altogether, justified. Not seldom it has had no solid justification, but has been as empty as the prejudice of Nathaniel when he said, ' Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? '

I need not re-examine the vagaries of the Popular Pulpit which have occasioned this

prejudice with such sad frequency. But varieties of the prejudice we have all been familiar with. Some have exhibited it because they did not view any kind of preaching with favour. They have failed to see that preaching is ordained of God as the chief instrument of men's salvation. Really, such prejudice is the result of lack of spiritual vision. This may seem a hard saying, but it is a faithful saying. To realize God's ordination of preaching will be curative of all such prejudice. Prejudice against Popular Preaching often arises from failure to realize what are the characteristics of true and excellent Popular Preaching. The preaching which is biblical, evangelical, experimental, interesting, faithful, simple in phraseology, and charged with yearning for the full salvation of the hearer is the only truly Popular Preaching. But many do not perceive this. They take the perversions of the good thing to be the thing itself. All who allow themselves in this prejudice should search their hearts as to whether this be not the secret of this prejudice. ' What is the chaff to the wheat ? ' they should inquire, and they should beware lest they reject the wheat under the delusion that it is chaff. Were this always done, the prejudice against Popular Preaching would melt away from all who entertain it thus and so.

Another explanation of the prejudice I am speaking of is the undue absorption of some in other

elements of the Church. Pastoral visitation is a splendidly beneficent work. It enriches alike those who visit and those who are visited. But it has been known to be so valued by some people as to lead them to depreciate Popular Preaching. They have freely said that they cared not what a preacher was in the pulpit did he but constitute himself an industrious visitor. Surely this is 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' As a matter of fact, though often unappreciated fact, many of the Popular Preachers have been the most assiduous pastors. Why pit the one against the other? Both are ordained of God and blessed of God. Some have been so absorbed in other ordinances of God, such as the Lord's Supper and various means of grace that they have publicly allowed themselves in a prejudice against Popular Preaching. But, again, why pit the one against the other? It is highly to be desired to keep in this regard 'the proportion of the faith.' It may truly be affirmed in this connexion that Popular Preachers have not seldom been conspicuous for their reverent zeal for the Lord's Supper and all other social means of grace.

Others have manifested a prejudice against Popular Preaching because they have been so devoted to all manner of Church work. In their zealous practice of such work they have been most exemplary and most praiseworthy, but it has had

a blameworthy result in that it has sometimes led to a persistent depreciation of that royal ordinance for which I plead. Again, why pit the one against the other? And yet again, is it not a fact that many Popular Preachers have thrown themselves grandly into sympathetic co-operation with all who have wrought Christian service?

Popular Preaching inspires to Christian work. It ministers to the sustentation of Christian work. Without it, Church work will have little chance of permanent profitableness. I will not waste words in setting forth in detail the prejudice against Popular Preaching which springs out of conceit. There has been a prolific crop of such contemptible prejudice. The 'superior' order of man and woman decries all preaching which the common people hear gladly. He deems every Dr. Dryasdust a 'thoughtful' preacher. He believes with all his little soul in the dignity of dullness. I forbear further to characterize such intellectual snobs. Their prejudice is a negligible quantity. I would plead with intense solicitude, as in the sight of God, as in the sight of Christ, against the prejudice against Popular Preaching. It can be nothing but harmful to the Church of God. I would plead with my brother-preachers to shun as they would shun a plague all that give even a show of reason to such prejudice. Let us avoid even the appearance of evil. Let us search and

try our hearts continually, that we give no occasion to the prejudiced. Be it grandly obvious to all that we are good ministers of Jesus Christ.

If it were possible, I would plead even more earnestly with our Churches and people against such prejudice. Again and again I would protest that I speak of the only worthy Popular Preaching. To harbour prejudice against it is to dishonour the ordinance of God. I dare to declare that it is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Certainly this prejudice is inimical to the welfare of the Church. Nothing gathers the people, and nothing converts the people, like Popular Preaching. The history of the Church demonstrates the truth of this assertion, and the more carefully that history is studied the more vivid is that demonstration.

In particular, the record of the people called Methodists illustrates our contention. Popular Preaching is the human secret of our success. Present-day Methodism cannot contemplate this too carefully. Methodism's greatest triumph has been the captivating of all sorts and conditions of the people by the proclamation of the gospel. If it should ever wither in this function, it will wither at the core. The greatest want of the Churches to-day is Popular Preaching. I proclaim my deepest conviction regarding the Churches in so affirming. A revival of Popular Preaching would cause many other

much-to-be-desired revivals to follow in its beneficent train.

The solution of the acute problem of empty or half-empty churches is in a widespread revival of Popular Preaching. No marvel if conversions be few in many churches when the people in those churches are so few. All angling is comparatively vain if there be no fish in the stream. The problem of depleted funds in the churches is soon solved if the churches are filled with people. Church expenditure is the intolerable burden it is in many churches because there is such sparseness of people in those churches.

So for many reasons, and I think, valid reasons, I deplore any prejudice against Popular Preaching. Oh, that a zeal for it might be engendered among preachers and people! Let no other function of the Church be undervalued, but let this have the chief place! To gather multitudes of men and women and children to hear 'the joyful sound' is an ambition so sacred and so splendid that it might well fill the heart of the hosts of the holy angels. To fill the souls of the multitude with the bread of God is the greatest achievement of the Church of God. It was this sublime work which filled the Saviour's hands when He, 'the Word become flesh,' tabernacled among us.

Chapter III

THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF POPULAR PREACHING

What are the constituent elements of Popular Preaching as it is understood in this Lecture? This must now engage our thoughtful and prayerful attention. Not that we can hope to give a complete answer to such an inquiry. A library of substantial volumes could not exhaust such a theme. I can only hope to make my suggestions outlinear, and by no means a completed picture.

First of all, the true Popular Preaching must be perpetually biblical. I contend not here for a theory of the inspiration of the Bible, though I hold my own theory with ever-increasing intensity, and I am always ready to give my reasons for it. Suffice it now to say that Popular Preaching must be based upon the Bible as a divine revelation. And this must be unequivocal. There must be no 'ifs' or 'buts' about it. The appeal must be to the Bible as *final*. It is not to be regarded as 'literature' or as in competition with other literature. It is not to be viewed as an historic collection of the multifarious opinions of good

men. Its voice is, 'Thus saith the Lord.' No Popular Preaching which is hesitant concerning the inspiration and authority of Scripture can be fruitful. The Popular Preaching of history has always rung true to the Bible as 'the Word of God.' The insuperable claims of the Bible must be stoutly maintained if the Popular Pulpit is to retain its sovereign power.

The finest Popular Preaching is always prevailingly biblical. This has been true of the Popular Pulpit in every age and place. Sometimes it has been specially exegetical, sometimes specially expository, sometimes specially experimental, and sometimes specially applicatory; but it has always been rooted and grounded in the Bible. It is wonderful, and yet not wonderful, how truly popular such preaching has always been, and how truly popular it is to-day.

Dr. Parker used to say that 'exposition alone can save the ministry from dullness,' and it is profoundly true. The Bible is the most interesting of all books. And it grows more interesting the more it is perused. Herein it is superior to any other book. Reiterated reading of the most fascinating books dims their interestingness, but the Bible glows with interestingness the more persistently it is studied. It possesses an inexhaustible interest, and this is one of the countless arguments for its divine origin. 'One gem from

this ocean is worth all the pebbles from earthly streams,' said Robert Murray McCheyne, and in every sense this is true. It is to be observed also that this is the verdict of the most omnivorous readers. It is not those who are unversed in other literature who sing most loudly the praises of the Bible ; it is they who know literature best, whose reading is ' oceanic,' who pronounce the Bible to be, in its versatile interest, the flower and crown of books.

The preacher who expounds God's book to the heart and life of man will always be popular. The preacher upon whom the Bible casts a spell will cast a spell upon the people—not on their fancy merely, but upon their heart and conscience. All pulpit popularity which is not based upon the exposition of Scripture ' cometh up like a flower and is cut down.' But Popular Preaching which is full of ' Bibline,' as C. H. Spurgeon termed it, ' abideth for ever.' It cannot decline till the Bible declines. Every hearer will find in it something which interests him and edifies him. Of such preaching it may be truly said that ' age cannot wither it, nor custom stale its infinite variety.'

I emphasize the fact that Popular Preaching is interesting preaching, and that it can only be permanently interesting if it be saturated with the Bible. Those who know the Bible best will be competent judges of this assertion. I am more

and more impressed with the wonderful inclusiveness of Scripture. What does it not contain? What manner of precious stone is wanting from this God-fashioned casket? It is wonderfully analogous to nature in this, as in so many regards. So strikingly is this true that I am irrevocably convinced that the Author of the one is the Author of the other. This being so, the Bible having such astonishing variety, what a pledge of constant interestingness it affords to him who preaches it! Such preaching cannot fail of popularity.

Popular Preaching of this scriptural order meets, at one time or another, all the needs of every hearer. It will give him light and guidance on every subject. It will panoply him for every battle. It will equip him for every emergency. It will enable him to live, and it will enable Him to do valiantly in 'the swelling of Jordan.' In a word, it will bring him salvation. Brother preacher! Keep always to the Bible! Be able to say with David, 'I have stuck unto Thy testimonies,' and you will be numbered in the splendid succession of the Popular Preachers who are approved of God and well pleasing to man.

I cannot insist too warmly and too incessantly on this essential attribute of Popular Preaching. All Popular Preaching without this is 'less than nothing, and vanity.' O for a world-wide revival of such preaching! Whenever the preacher

stands up, like Ezra, in his pulpit, like Ezra let him expound the Word of God, and again, like Ezra, his congregation will sit enthralled. Such preaching has been the glory of our own denomination from the beginning. And it has been the glory of the pulpit of all the Churches from the beginning. Did it die out, the menaceful 'Ichabod' would be traced in fiery letters upon the pulpit.

Popular Preaching is essentially evangelical. That has been one of its chief constituents from the Day of Pentecost to to-day. No Popular Preaching needs to be taken into account which is not evangelical. It may abide for a while, but it vanishes like a wraith. Its fate is sure. Let history, and the history of our own times, attest how indisputably true this is. No preaching is really and abidingly popular which is not aflame with Redeeming Love—Redeeming Love as disclosed in the eternal counsel of the Father, and in the Atoning Cross of God the Son, and in the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. The retrospect and the resolve of the Popular Preacher is :

> Redeeming Love has been my theme,
> And shall be till I die.

It is 'the satisfactory Cross' which makes preaching really popular. Man's salvation lies in the

evangelical and ethical implications of the Cross of Christ. Whenever it is preached it commends itself to man's conscience. It may offend his taste. He may resent its terrible import. But ultimately the Spirit of God will cause him to see that it is the good news of God to him. So, soon or late, the preaching of the Cross becomes truly Popular Preaching.

Preachers and people should give heed to what 'the Spirit saith unto the Churches' concerning this momentous matter. The Spirit speaks loudly on this subject in Holy Scripture; loudly in the heart and conscience of the Christian; loudly in the recorded history of the pulpit. How fragile and short-lived has been all Popular Preaching which has not started from, and returned to, 'a place which is called Calvary'! Preaching which has taken the deity out of Christ, the Atonement out of the Cross, faith out of the method of salvation, and the indwelling of the Divine Spirit out of Christian experience is 'cut down like the grass and withereth.' Study the history of preaching, read the biographies of preachers, ponder the story of the Churches, and the evidence of this will multiply overwhelmingly upon you.

Popular Preaching must be always evangelistic. It must press 'the plan of salvation' upon the people. It must plead for 'Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' It must

set forth ' Christ crucified,' and that ' evidently.' It must warn men to ' flee from the wrath to come,' never belittling that awful wrath and never seeking to explain it away. It must disclose ' the sinfulness of sin,' and bring home to rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, that they are by nature ' guilty before God.' Specially it must importunately call for faith as the one condition of salvation. Like John Wesley, ' Salvation by Faith alone ' must be the Popular Preacher's flaming watchword. England sadly needs that the glorious New Testament, Puritan, evangelical gospel of Salvation by Faith alone should resound everywhere, as it did in the brave days of Luther and of Wesley.

But will *such* preaching be popular ? Assuredly it will. The great evangelical eras of Christian history attest it. The history of Methodism attests it. The careers of the great modern evangelist preachers attest it. What of C. H. Spurgeon ? What of Joseph Parker ? What of Alexander Maclaren ? What of Alexander Whyte ? What of many a Methodist preacher, widely known or of limited renown ?

It is apparently paradoxical, but it is accredited fact, that absolute faithfulness is an essential condition of truly Popular Preaching. No preacher is permanently popular if he does not make people uncomfortable. He must wound with the sword

of the Spirit. He must show them 'all the mercy' by showing them 'all the sin.' The people must know that, like a sleuth-hound, the preacher is pursuing them for their salvation. They will not finally resent what is told them by a man whom they are assured loves them.

Popular Preaching must be uniformly experimental. It must probe the soul. It must show men what they are by sin, and what they are by grace. It must track sin to all its lairs, even the remotest, in the soul of man. It must 'warn every man and teach every man.' It must aim to 'present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' How to be saved, and how to be sanctified, and how to serve the age, and how to win heaven at last, must be the matter of the preacher's utterance, so he will be 'as a loud-speaking trumpet or a clanging cymbal.'

Popular Preaching must be rich in tenderness. The people have always demanded pathos in their preachers. Sympathy makes a preacher to be 'King in Jerusalem.' The people have a hard battle to fight, every one of them. They have tragedies within and without. The average commonplace man is really romantic, did we but know all his inner and outer life. Every man is interesting if we know him and his environment with any thoroughness. And the pathetic aspect of every man's life is really overwhelming when

we have full cognizance of it. Yes! For spiritual and temporal reasons, the people need tenderness.

Even the terrible things of God should evoke great tenderness. When Andrew Bonar told Robert Murray McCheyne that he had been preaching on 'Eternal Punishment,' he asked significally, 'Did you preach it tenderly?' Our tears will drive the law of God home to men far more surely than our stoutest arguments. Really Popular Preaching has always quivered with tenderness. People soon tire of the man who has 'brass throat and iron lungs.' The hard man, the metallic man has a short run as a preacher to the people. 'Tears gain everything,' said Santa Teresa. It is not wide of the mark to affirm that of the preacher. When F. W. Robertson's tear fell on his Bible as he preached, it accomplished more than all his deft sentences and all his beautiful thoughts. Such Popular Preaching demands that the preacher be 'endued with power from on high.' He must be electric with the Holy Ghost. As Thomas Goodwin said, the Holy Ghost must 'Second our sermons.' Again, every real preacher must cry, 'who is sufficient for these things?' Happily the question, if addressed to God, is sure of an all-sufficing answer. Such Popular Preaching leads every true preacher to cry, 'Brethren, pray for us.' And again happily, our noble-hearted people may be

relied upon to comply with our request far more amply than we shall ever know upon earth.

In describing the constituent elements of Popular Preaching, certain considerations, minor as compared with those which have been adduced, but relatively important, may be mentioned. If a preacher is to be valued of the people, they must be able to hear what he says. He must speak up. Surely he ought to do so, for he has good news to tell, and good news should thrill the whole personality of him who tells it. If a man cannot be heard, people will infer that God did not intend that man to be heard. It may be judged by some to be fanatical, but I venture to say that gospel preaching affects beneficially even the voice of the preacher. The Holy Spirit can clarify the vocal powers of a preacher. But assuredly the mumbler, the whisperer, the man who informs his waistcoat, can never serve the office of a Popular Preacher. Popular Preaching should be eminently reverential. The whole demeanour of the preacher should be itself a sermon. The buffoon, wherever else he is found, should never be discovered in the pulpit. Reverence, deep and constant, alone befits the pulpit. A holy awe should overspread him who serves at Jehovah's altar. God enjoins that He will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him, and before all the people He will be glorified. Shall

self-conscious antics belong to him who does the King's business? The manner of the preacher should be as a sign between God and the people.

Nor must pulpit prayer be omitted when the subject of Popular Preaching is under consideration. It has always been a great reinforcement of preaching, and a great preparation for preaching, and a great empowerment to preaching. The noble preachers have been noble in prayer. The prayers of the pulpit give the atmosphere to the service. When pulpit prayer declines, the power of preaching declines. As the preacher prays, so will be the power and grace of his preaching. If he has nothing to say to God he will have nothing to say to man. In prayer he receives 'the preparation of the heart,' and then the sermon is 'the answer of the tongue.' Even this representation of what constitutes the only worthy Popular Preaching—a portraiture which is 'given in outline and no more,' and that an imperfect outline—even *this* discloses what a solemnly glorious function Popular Preaching is. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate its worth, or its necessity. Its wonderful history should check depreciation and deter from prejudice against it. Vain is it to object that we preachers have often failed to fulfil even the ideal which has been before us in this chapter. None is so painfully conscious of this default as is the preacher himself. But no

shortcoming should ever arrest the preacher's following after the ideal. What is the course of a preacher who is called of God but a life-long following 'the pattern shown in the mount'? Let the servant of God who strives to tell glad tidings to the people have the strong support of the Church's sympathy and love. He has a hundred remorses that the people know not of. Petulant and cynical criticism freezes his blood, but affectionate appreciation warms his heart with the very 'flame of Jehovah.'

I have more than once already spoken of the inspiring history of Popular Preaching; let me again revert to it, as in all likelihood I may several times do, ere our meditations close. It may be said without over-statement that the whole Bible is largely a record of Popular Preaching. And what a wonderful instrumentality it is therein disclosed to be! How consecrated and inspired men and women have spoken in God's behalf to the people! And what rich results have accrued! Men and women turned to God. The name of the Triune God exalted. Sin forsaken. Salvation accepted. Holy living generated. Wounds healed. Tears dried. Problems solved. Jordan triumphantly passed. These are but some of the recorded results of such preaching.

One other result remains to be told, namely, the creation and sustentation of the Church of God,

How large a part in that enterprise has such preaching had! And how large a part it plays to-day! The earlier Methodists had the right instinct when they described their ministers as 'our preachers,' and when they spoke of their sanctuaries as 'preaching-places.' We, their descendants, might well emulate their example in this. Again I say that we do not depreciate other instrumentalities; we deeply value them all; but we cannot but give the supreme place to the ministry of preaching the common salvation to the common people.

This disposition is accentuated when we attempt to realize what Popular Preaching accomplishes to-day. It is in nowise shorn of its ancient force. Such Popular Preaching as I am alone contending for is as replete with power divine as it was in days of old. By it souls are saved with an everlasting salvation. By it men and women have their carking cares assuaged, and their gnawing fears annulled. By it social life is purified and beautified. By it business life is sanctified and transformed from a pursuit of selfish ends to a service for mankind. By it political life is enriched and made a ministry of God. By it the glory of God descends upon the wilderness of this sinful world. Granted that there be any virtue and any truth in this estimate, then the Churches should diligently encourage Popular Preaching. Never

should they frown it down, or neglect the Popular Preacher—not for the man's sake, but for the sake of his office.

Not for the man's sake! No, in nowise! Let every preacher lay that to heart, lest self-love poison his soul and pervert his holy ministry, or lest the leprosy of Gehazi cleave to him, and to his seed for ever. More and more let the man disappear from his own view; let the man be hidden behind his Saviour's Cross. Let him glory in the Lord and in the sacred work which is committed to his trust, and for which he must give account at the last. O for a Church-wide enthusiasm for Popular Preaching! At all costs let the gospel be everywhere proclaimed. No function of the Church must be exalted above this, either by preachers or by people. All around us are men and women redeemed by Christ who have not yet received the glad tidings. With the passion of the old crusaders let them be reached and evangelized!

And all around us are professing Christians who need to be summoned to higher heights of holy living. They are on the misty plains when they might revel on the sunlit heights. To those sublime heights let them be bidden. We need the Popular Preaching which will enable Christians to attain to 'the sanctification of the spirit.' The gospel of full salvation needs to be sounded forth

to the Church. Yes! The age demands a full-orbed gospel, a gospel which shall evangelize alike the unbeliever and the believer. For this urgent reason I plead for Popular Preaching. It alone can meet the clamant necessities of all sorts and conditions of men.

May I not, in closing this chapter, appeal to the gifted and earnest youthhood of the Churches to take up the glorious work of Popular Preaching. Interesting, fervent, instructive preachers were never needed more than to-day. 'Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?' Bright, cultured, young folk cannot essay a nobler task than that of declaring the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The people will respond to such preachers. They will neither lack honour nor true success. Put the trumpet to your lips, young man! 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.'

God give us a goodly dower of Popular Preachers who will burn for Emmanuel with fervent heat of enthusiasm! May the Lord of the preachers ordain a shining host who shall ceaselessly cry, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!' That cry will transform the Church and the world. It will also transform him who cries, and make him such that he shall be as an angel of God in this grey world.

Chapter IV

THE SACRED EXAMPLE OF POPULAR PREACHING

'God had only one son and He made Him a preacher,' said the learned and epigrammatic Thomas Goodwin, who was the epigrammatist of the learned Puritans. The old divine might have added that God made His son a Popular Preacher. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God the Son, is the abiding Model of Popular Preaching. Let us reverently follow some features of the sacred example for ever set before all preachers. It needs but little imagination to realize the exterior elements of the preaching of Him like whom never man spake. The picture of the historical Christ in the New Testament is as arresting as it is charming, and as opulent in suggestiveness as it is fascinating to our contemplation. His presence was spell-like. Wherever He went, all eyes were fastened upon Him, whether those eyes gleamed with love or burned with the hell-fire of hate. Though 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,' yet His beauty assuredly made Him to

be desired of many. The majesty of His mien awed the multitudes. Whilst still unglorified, surely ' His eyes were as a flame of fire.' His smile scattered summer-light over the wintry earth. His manner was a wondrous blend of kingliness and humbleness. His voice was now a lovely lullaby and now whelming as ' the voice of many waters.' ' Words of grace ' is the scriptural description of His speech. And it is an enthralling description, and as accurate as it is enthralling. As to their form and as to their spirit they were assuredly ' words of grace.' One scarcely likes to speak of the vocabulary of Jesus. Yet surely it would be a ' voluntary humility ' which constrained us to be silent about it. It is a delightful study. And an assiduous study of it would recompense every preacher richly. Our Lord's language has been the wonder of reverent students of literature in all the Christian centuries. It has been pronounced to be the ideal of public speech by every competent critic. ' Acceptable words ' they truly are. The Word was a Lord of words as He was Lord of all things. None ever uttered such profound and revealing truths, and none ever clothed truth in such vestures of beauty. Let none depreciate words in preaching. The Lord's example freezes with one rebuke all such ill-judged depreciation. How much, we may reverently say, Christ's preaching owes, in its

popular effect, to the grace and power of His matchless vocabulary! His words revealed the soul of truth within them. Then as now the inevitable and rhythmic word gained the ear and helped to win the heart even of the untutored who heard. Like their Master, the greatest Popular Preachers have been lords of language. The gift of expression possessed by the early Church Fathers has never been adequately appreciated. The really wonderful vocabulary of the Puritan preachers has never had the high praise which it merits. The mighty preachers of the Evangelical Revival were masters of words and phrases. John Wesley's English yet awaits worthy appreciation. George Whitefield was 'mighty in word.' James Harvey was a master of dainty and pungent speech. Wesley's preachers and their immediate successors were, many of them, distinctive in this regard. No study of this attribute of the early Methodist preachers has, as far as I know, up to now appeared.

In the mid-period of Methodism, diction was a notable characteristic of the Popular Preachers. Such names as Samuel Bradburn, Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, suggest typical instances. In my early days I frequently heard the reliable tradition of the beautiful and powerful vocabulary of such pulpit-masters as Dr. Jabez Bunting, Dr. Beaumont, and Dr. Robert Newton. And I

heard for myself the ' words of grace ' which fell from the lips of such preachers as Morley Punshon, Ebenezer Jenkins, and Richard Roberts. The same line of observation becomes emphasized when we remember many of the classical Popular Preachers of the Church of England and of the Free Churches, to whom many of us have listened in the course of our lifetime. I may be indicted as a pessimist, but I am compelled to say that one reason why much modern preaching is not popular is that the gift of public expression has so considerably declined. In this, in my judgement, the old school of preachers distinctly outshone the modern school. Thought should be wedded to worthy speech. Our Lord's example in this, as in all things, demands devoted study.

What an ideal of Adaptation does our Master's preaching put before us ! And adaptation is an essential of Popular Preaching. What is said must be adapted to those to whom it is said. This is a sovereign law of public speech. This law our Saviour abundantly fulfilled. It is as interesting as it is instructive to note the adaptation of the God-man Preacher. When He speaks to the critical, the cynical, the intellectually vain, how like lightning-flashes are His utterances ! How flaming are His repartees ! How terse and tense ! Till such hearers became afraid of our Lord's rejoinders, and forbore to put to Him some

of their premeditated inquiries. They said cautiously and fearingly ' If we shall say,' ' He will say.' Our Lord, when he spoke to the educated, spoke as befitted Him ' in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' He caused conceited and vainglorious scholars to be grasshoppers in their own and other people's sight, even as they were in His sight. Christ adapted His speech to men of all avocations : to lawyers, to priests, to farmers, to fishermen. He adapted His speech to womanhood and to childhood. There was seed suited to all soil in the seed-basket of ' the Sower who went forth to sow.'

This, again, must ever be a characteristic of Popular Preaching. It must not appeal merely to a clique, but to the common heart and mind of man. It is true that no one preacher can reach all sorts and conditions of people. Varied personalities are required to save varied personalities, yet, in degree, each preacher may, in the pulpit and out of it, be with Paul-like adaptiveness, ' all things to all men.' This requirement makes preaching a tremendous task—and it *is* a tremendous task from every point of view. It is so tremendous that Christ says, with specialty of emphasis, to every preacher, ' Without Me ye can do nothing.' Too often the pulpit has a strangely limited appeal. How contrastive to the universality of the appeal made by Jesus Christ ! The ideal Popular

Preaching has a word for all: for the cultured and for the ignorant, for children and for the aged, for the believer and for the unconverted, for the busy and for the leisured, for the glad-hearted and for the sorrowful, for the prosperous and for such as are dwelling in a wilderness of care and adversity. Truly it is a strenuous commission which the preacher has. What industry, what painstakingness, what ceaseless prayer, what separatedness to his work does such a calling demand! The true preacher ever hears his Master say, 'Pray without ceasing,' and he ever enjoins his people, saying, 'Brethren, pray for us.'

Still keeping our reverent eyes upon what we have described as the exterior of our Lord's Popular Preaching, let it be noted that He took pains to reach His hearers. He reached the people by going to them. That seems a very obvious explanation, but it has more than obviousness in it. Protracted and even pompous discussions have been heard or read of the question, 'How to reach the masses.' It is surely a simple but sufficing answer: 'Go to them.' If the time spent in such interminable discussions were spent in doing the work, the result would be vastly more remunerative. Christ was always going forth to sow the good seed. He only rested that He might more effectively pursue His work. He retired into quiet that He might generate power for fresh

service. He was always at His sacred work. How He travelled over land and sea! By day and by night He pressed on at His toil. Now in the city, now in the villages, now in the wilderness, He was ever on the heaven-ordained track. Now in the synagogue, now in the temple courts, now in the private house, now in the fields, now on the highway, now on the lake, now on the mountain, He preached the Word. He addressed great multitudes, and little clusters of people, and solitary individuals with equal zeal and love and power. His work was ' meat ' to Him. Service nourished Him. His preaching ministered life to Him.

Here again, He is the sacred Ideal of the Popular Preacher. If preaching is not the preacher's passion, it is nothing. The love of souls must be a very fire in the preacher's bones. His work must be his recreation. To ' save some ' he must be ever seeking to reach all. No one must be able to suspect him of idleness. The zeal of God's house must eat him up. We greatly need to let the world see that we are determined that all sorts and conditions of men shall hear the ' glad tidings.' Conventionalism must be quenched. All sorts of methods must be plied to this gracious and glorious end. If we cannot get the sick man to the Saviour through the door we must uncover the roof; but get him to Christ we must. We must go out into the highways and hedges and compel the wanderers

to come in. Do not let us wait for orders. Go! Into courtyards and byways, into market-places, out to lone cottages, every way we must go with our dead-reviving news. O for more of such Christ-like methods of reaching the people! Nor let our industry find such spheres only as have been just described. The preacher must reach other orders of people by going to them where they congregate. Henry Drummond preached in the drawing-rooms of the rich, as George Whitefield did before him. Catherine Booth discoursed similarly in private houses. We must not have a restricted evangelism. Dr. Dale often reminded us that rich people have souls to be saved as well as poor people, and educated folk as well as ignorant. We still need that pungent reminder. Our Lord got at what are called 'the upper classes,' as well as what are termed 'the lower classes.' Villadom needs the gospel as well as cottages. 'The school of one Tyrannus' may well be turned into a preaching place. Benjamin Hellier used to say that if he preached to the British Association he would take as his text, 'Ye must be born again'; and there was great insight in that remark. The worthy Popular Preaching, like that of our Lord, makes unceasing haste to evangelize all mankind.

And what pains the Master took that all might have the sovereign opportunity! When He

confronted people, He spared no effort. 'He *opened His mouth*.' It would be well if every preacher followed His example in this. Speak up, brother. Vain to bring good news if you mumble it. 'He *taught* them.' We must not merely attract attention, or entertain, or amuse, or make them think how smart we are; we must *teach* them what is necessary to their winning everlasting life.

When we come to study the deeper things of our Lord's preaching, how replete with instruction and appeal we discern that preaching to be. Verily He is the sacred Example of Popular Preaching. How He burned for the glory of God! He cared not for man's applause or blame. If He inquired, 'What think ye of Christ?' it was only that, through Him, men might be brought to God. He was dominated by His passion for God. And how did He achieve God's glory? It was by saving mankind. And He saved mankind by leading them to repentance and to faith in Himself, the Son of God. To secure this no labour was too severe, no sacrifice too immense. For this He prayed. For this He was 'straitened.' For this He was baptized with a flaming baptism. All His preaching was for this sole end. This was its motive. This was its sustaining energy. This alone he estimated as its success. Here, again, our Lord is the abiding Model of Popular Preaching.

To copy any other can no true preacher be content. This is the pattern shown to all preachers in the mount. With this shining and solitary example in view, every preacher must make lamentation, and cry, ' I have not attained.' In presence of this Divine Pattern, every preacher must be, in his own sight, an unprofitable servant. But with his Lord's example to fire him, every preacher may well be inspired with the quenchless fire of emulation. To this pattern he will strive to be modelled : he will live striving mightily in strength divine ; and he will die with this ' flame of Jehovah ' glowing in his inmost heart. Fill the pulpits with such intensely emulative preachers and such revival will shake the world as the world never knew before. Give us such preachers in crowds, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God !

What a scriptural preacher was the Incarnate Messenger of the Covenant. He was saturated with the Word of God. The authority of His Message was the Scripture of Truth. He did not depend upon His own divine power, but upon His Father's Word. Personally and officially He lived by the ' It is written.' Nothing is more wonderful in His ministry than His subordination of Himself to the written Word. He appealed upon the Bible. He argued from the Bible. He illustrated from the Bible. To Him the Bible had supreme finality. ' The Scripture cannot be

broken,' He declared, and that declaration revealed the whole spirit of His ministry. He was, first, midst, and last, an expository preacher, and His grand example stands for ever as the model of all faithful and soul-redeeming preaching.

This, again, is the Popular Preaching which is needed, long as the age shall last. It must be quick with the inspired and infallible Word of God. The opinions of men, however brilliant or however holy, have no converting force, but the Word of God assuredly has. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul'—any soul and every soul, in every place, and in every age. When this is deeply burned into every preacher's soul there will be Popular Preaching of a lofty order. There will be an end of man's philosophizings, and of man's conjectures, and of man's flippancies. 'Mr. By-ends' will never occupy a pulpit then. Then preaching will have an august authoritativeness which will awe the people, and enchain the attention of the people, and kindle the ardours of the people, and smite the conscience of the people, and bring the people to the Cross, that thence they may come to the reconciled God.

It may be confidently declared that the sacred Example of Popular Preaching focused His message upon His precious death. All led up to this. The promised Spirit was proclaimed as yet more effectually to lead up to this. In his youth

the shadow of His redeeming Cross lay heavy upon Him. From the beginning of His ministry He proclaimed it. Assuredly it was no afterthought to Him ; nor in this matter was there a development in His teaching and preaching. Always, from the beginning, He was ' the son of man ' who was to be ' lifted up,' and ' to give His life a ransom instead of many.' This was the ground-note of all His melodious ministry. His ' blood ' was the central core of His message. Not His peerless character, not His matchless teachings, but His atoning Cross, was what He proclaimed as the way of salvation.

Again, in this our Lord is the Model of the Popular Preaching of the age. This must be its glory, its potency, or it will have no glory and no potency. The only preaching which can win man's salvation is centred in the Cross of Christ. ' We preach Christ crucified,' or we had better never preach at all. ' We preach Christ crucified ' : then we have divine authority. ' We preach Christ crucified ' : then, and only then, the Spirit of God works by us and drives the proclamation home. The history of preaching shows that this is the only preaching which is soul-saving and life-transforming. Moreover, the history of preaching demonstrates that this preaching alone is truly and enduringly popular. True, there is to some an ' offence ' in it. To some it is ' foolishness.'

But it enchains the ear and wins the heart as no other preaching does. The transcendent Popular Preachers have been the willing and joyful slaves of the Cross of Christ. From the days of Paul, through Luther and Bunyan and Wesley and Spurgeon, to our day, the preaching of the Cross has been, in general, as approved of man as it has been acceptable to God. O for a world-wide revival of such Popular Preaching! It alone can be truly abreast of our times. It alone is bread for man's soul-hunger and living water for man's soul-thirst. It created and characterized the early Methodist Revival, and it will bring again another such revival. 'Haste again, ye days of grace!' If Popular Preaching is to recover its honourableness and retain it, it must revert to its original and divine pattern. Cross-centric it must vigorously and joyfully be. It must be red with the Redeeming Blood. In all tones it must call men to the Cross.

Our Lord's is the eternal type of Popular Preaching in its persistent summons to faith as the sole condition of salvation. It ever aimed to make every man 'him that believeth on Jesus.' It honoured man's reason, but it demanded man's faith. Always and everywhere it challenged men to believe. They must extend the hand of faith to receive the supreme benefit. They must open the mouth wide and God would fill it. They must

rely upon Christ and they would have ' everlasting life.' Clamouring to ' work the works of God,' this was declared to be ' the work of God '—that they should believe on Him whom the Father had sent. Yet again, in this our Lord is the Popular Preacher's Sacred Example. Salvation by Faith is not simply the Pauline message, it is the message of Christ, and it is the Christian message. The Holy Spirit makes it consciously authentic to them that hear. This, too, was the charm and the power of all the great evangelical revivals. Where this is not preached there may be an ecclesiastical or a social revival, but there can never be a spiritual or soul-saving revival. It is wonderful how the knower of hearts makes the true to be the popular. Let salvation by faith be preached ardently and interestingly, and men's hearts warm towards it. It makes the wilderness blossom as the rose. Men recognize it as the heavenly vision. Let this be preached, and the pulpit will be radiant with human approbation, and men will declare that God is in the preacher, and will fall down and worship, not the preacher, but the preacher's God.

Behold the Saviour of mankind once again as the type of Popular Preaching, and observe His quivering sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men. Only a Divine Being can have a perfect sympathy with universal man. I am prepared to adduce Christ's incomparable sympathy as a

sovereign evidence of His deity. He felt, not with an order of men, but with *all* men. There was no remoteness in Him from any man in any circumstances. He had a sovereignty of sympathy. How tender He was to the fallen! How He entered into the broken heart! How He responded to young manhood! What a key He had to the heart of a child! 'He had compassion upon the multitude'—and He had compassion upon the multitude before any multitude existed. He felt for the sick. He knew the tragic poverty which may be associated with riches. He had sympathy with the poor. It was the special miracle and 'sign' of Christianity that 'the poor have the gospel preached unto them.' He had sympathy with the intellectual. It was to be expected when He was 'the very image' of 'the only wise God.' He realized the pathetic limitations of the acutest mind of man. He sympathized with the ignorant as only One who knew all things could. O the sweet sympathy of the Divine Preacher! O His captivating tenderness! His tears prevailed. 'Where the word of a king is there is power'—and when that word is suffused with sympathy the power is all but omnipotent. It is always Popular Preaching which is Christ-like in its sympathy. Nothing charms like sympathy. When I was a schoolboy, in Scarborough, and listened to the powerful evangelical preaching of the

revered James Sugden, the tears which streamed down his cheeks appealed for decision for Christ as no eloquence or genius could ever have done. Sympathy makes the pulpit mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Be it added that our Divine Pulpit-Exemplar burningly realized the value of the human soul. All souls were His, and He alone knew their worth. The possibilities of the soul were vividly present to Him. He saw the son of Abraham in despised Zaccheus, and the daughter of Abraham in the soiled Samaritan woman. He saw that a soul which was a foul hell could be transformed into a golden heaven. He despaired of none. An immortal soul constituted the importance of the meanest to Him. And our Lord is, finally, the Sacred Example of Popular Preaching because He so intensely realized the eternal destiny of man. How real heaven was to Him! It was His 'Father's House,' and to gather souls into those 'many mansions' was His ecstatic pursuit. How real was hell to Him! And to rescue men from the wrath to come was His ever-anxious endeavour. Deep in the heart of general mankind is a response to faithful attempts to save them. They, soon or late, see through selfish and sordid popularity-hunting, but they appreciate those who unselfishly seek to save their souls. So in Popular Preaching, as in all things, Christ 'left us an example that we

should follow His steps.' Brother preachers, let us tune our pulpits to Christ's pulpit-music ! Let us scorn all tricks by which popularity is wooed. Let us fix our steadfast eye upon the Divine Preacher. And let the Churches beseech God in never-ceasing prayer that He will dower them, and dower the world, with preachers who shall tread in Christ's long-suffering way. With such preachers may the age be blessed till He come who Himself has set the ideal of how to ' hold forth the Word of life ' !

Chapter V

THE PERENNIAL EFFECTIVENESS OF POPULAR PREACHING

All through history, Popular Preaching has been effective. And its effectiveness has been many-coloured. This surely needs no verification. To any one who seriously reads history it is all but axiomatic. The pages of the Bible teem with evidences of this. Church history is eloquent of it. Right down to to-day the fact is amply and variedly substantiated. To-day it is abundantly demonstrated. Far be it from us to discredit or undervalue other religious instrumentalities. 'There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all.' But 'greater is he that prophesieth' is the abiding law in the Church.

Nothing can ever eclipse, nothing can rival, Popular Preaching. Some one asked Dr. Parker if he thought that literature would ever supersede preaching, and his pregnant reply was, 'Not till correspondence supersedes conversation.' No! Popular Preaching will always hold its golden sceptre. Books come and go, and their influence

is great, and will probably be greater. The Press is a wonderful pulpit, and may establish itself yet more widely in popular favour. Wireless is a glorious force, and we should rejoice in its widespread benefactions. Music is one of God's good angels, and it speeds beneficently over land and ocean. Philanthropy is one of God's chariots, in which He rides forth to minister beatitude to His creatures. Church services are wonderfully used of the Holy Spirit. Personal Christian activity and Church organization are great instruments of good. But preaching excels all, however virtuously they do. Nor is this the boasting of a self-deluded preacher. It is *fact*, easily realized by all who will investigate it.

I am ever an optimist regarding Popular Preaching, and in this optimism I find my warrant in the Word of God, and my validation in history and present-day life. Popular Preaching is perennially effective. It is so, first of all because it is eternally ordained of God. I believe this statement cannot be gainsaid. No believing reader of the Bible can deny it. From the days of Eden to this day it has been God's ordinance. God Himself was the earliest Proclaimer of the Glad Tidings, and He has never lacked a multitude to echo on the life-giving message. And He never will lack proclaimers till the Lord shall descend from heaven. This is not romancing. It is a sure word of

prophecy. Yes! It is God's eternal ordination. He that is 'higher than the highest,' in His deliberate wisdom chose this instrumentality. It is His perpetual 'good pleasure' *thus* to 'Save them that believe.' This gives us a solid confidence in this factor. We dare not doubt the potency of it. The pattern was shown us in the Mount. Who shall demur to what *God* has chosen? It will surely put an arrest upon depreciation of the pulpit to remember that God established it, and first occupied it. 'The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.' God never has revoked, and never will revoke His ordinance of Popular Preaching. Popular Preaching has been tragically abused, bitterly detested, cynically criticized, but it is ever effective when true to the highest. It can 'laugh at the shaking of the spear.'

Let us have confidence in what God has ordained. Any eclipse it suffers can be only temporary. What God does He does for ever. Ecclesiastical fashions and favouritisms change, but the pulpit is not man's invention, but God's creation. He knows what will best edify mankind through all time. His methods never become effete. Have supreme confidence in what God has made to be supreme! I know no appeal more necessary for the Protestant evangelical Churches than the appeal that they ever revive their faith in

the instrumentality of preaching. Let them think of it as God thinks of it. The faithful pulpit is built upon the Rock of Ages.

One secret of the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching is that in it God uses the instrumentality of human personality. Bishop Phillips Brooks's definition of preaching as the communication of truth through personality is as true as it is felicitous. What a power is personality! It is indefinable, like all the greatest realities of the universe, but, like the greatest realities of the universe, it is attested and vindicated by consciousness. Personality is, it might be reasonably claimed, the greatest of the works of God. It is greater than learning or genius. It is the most effective of all effective forces. It counts for more in every realm than anything else. In politics, in literature, in science, in art, in commerce, in society, personality has dominant power. In Popular Preaching you have a signal illustration of the power of personality. When all the gifts and graces of the historic Popular Preachers have been analysed, their personality has had to be accounted as their great and golden secret. Is not God's use of personality in the pulpit a wonderful study? What various kinds of men God has used, and does use! This has been markedly so in Methodism. We have always had a most inclusive variety in our Popular Pulpit.

We have had Boanerges and Barnabas. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. And I trust that we always shall have. We need each to reach all.

It might be shown with convincing clarity that the world owes a great obligation to the Popular Pulpit for the rich variety of personality it has exhibited. Where else has it been so richly demonstrated ? Where can it be better studied ? Seeing that personality is such an essential element of Popular Preaching, we have in this one of the guarantees of its perennial effectiveness. As long as human personality endures such preaching will endure. God will ordain His agents. God will call His messengers. God will put His spirit upon this man and that man ' till suns shall rise and set no more.' The truth of God abideth for ever, and personality will endure while the world remaineth ; so we may confidently reckon on the permanent power of Popular Preaching.

Another reason for our belief in the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching is that it is its nature to adapt itself to changing times. But some may doubt such a claim. Then I appeal to the Cæsar of history. The world-long history of Popular Preaching is a history of adaptation. I venture reverently to say, ' This is the Lord's doing.' He has seen to that. Looking upon the historical and present-day perspective of Popular

Preaching, we may truly say, as we behold it, 'There are so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.' It is nothing less than wonderful how the voices have been toned so as to be appropriate to the particular age in which they have sounded forth. In other words, how styles of preaching have varied all through the course of history! Every age has had its own pulpit. Some institutions fail for lack of adaptation. They made a successful appeal once, but they waxed old and decayed, and vanished away. Never will it be so with Popular Preaching. It will always adapt itself to the generation in which it functions. No increase of education, no development of taste, no change in the social order will prevent Popular Preaching from successfully fulfilling itself. It has it in it to 'do as occasion shall serve.' Again, I say, that the Lord who commanded the instrumentality will secure its adaptiveness. Its 'glory' will always be 'fresh' in it.

The gospel of grace never changes, and this will make Popular Preaching perennially effective. The only Popular Preaching which this Lecture contemplates is of such characteristics as have already been described. When I speak of Popular Preaching, I presuppose that it is evangelical in its very root and core. I now contend that such Preaching must, by virtue of its very nature, be

effective through seasons and days and months and years. It may truly be said of it, ' Its leaf also shall not wither.' How so ? Because of the changeless nature of the gospel. It might be inferred from the speech of some that the way of salvation is not now what it used to be. But this is an arch-delusion. The gospel of salvation by faith in the Atoning Saviour is an everlasting gospel. Man's disease is the same, and the God-given remedy is the same. No new culture, no new civilization, no ' modern thought,' can ever alter God's changeless decree that men are to have everlasting life only by faith in the Son of God, who died to redeem them. This gospel is for ever ' The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

Herein lies the fundamental secret of the effectiveness of Popular Preaching. It tells as triumphantly on the new generations as it did upon the ancient fathers. Never can it be out of date. In this matter the deep of history calls to the deep of present-day observation, and the two deeps make one music. Believe no shallow ' modern thinkers ' who proclaim the need of a new gospel. The old gospel is ever new. Its ' locks are bushy and black as a raven ' ; no grey hairs hint that it waxes old and is ready to vanish away. Keep on declaring this great salvation, O preacher, preach to rich and poor, young and old,

educated and ignorant, and your preaching will have the silvery dew always lying upon its branches! The Holy Spirit is pledged to make such preaching perennially effective. This is another golden consideration. This is another evidence that such preaching can never decline in power. If the pulpit dilates on social and political matters, if it prescribes ethical laws, if it speaks on 'current topics,' if it codifies and expounds 'modern thinking,' the Holy Spirit may or may not effectuate its utterances. But if the pulpit persists to preach salvation by the Lamb of God, the Holy Spirit, I repeat, is *pledged* to confirm the word.

What a reassurance this is as to Popular Preaching? It can never be untimely, never out of date, because 'The Eternal Spirit' actuates it. Never can it weaken till God the Holy Spirit weakens. We may say to Popular Preaching, as to the individual believer, 'The eternal God is thy refuge.' O let us ply this instrumentality more assiduously than ever! Never let our faith in it relax. It is a God-endued force, and therefore it must be an abiding force. The Holy Spirit will give it adaptiveness; He will put the emphasis upon the points which need to be specially emphasized as the generations come and go. Trust Him to work all in all! Refuse to be persuaded that other methods of saving men are likelier to be

effective in a new age. In Popular Preaching we have a force which God is committed to till the Lord shall descend from heaven.

Very pleasant it is to note another consideration, another *fact*, which helps us to realize the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching; it is this—that God always raises up new generations of such preachers. The order has never become extinct. It shows no presage of extinction to-day. The whole long history of the Christian Church illustrates this most refreshingly. But it will suffice if for our present purpose, we see how the history of Methodism supports our statement. The goodly fellowship of the Popular Preachers has never failed among us; it has been more numerous sometimes than at other times, but the succession has never been cut off. From John Wesley's age to ours we have always had a happy variety of such preachers. There have always been gloomy predictions that the stream would dry up, but it flows on through summer and winter, a very river of God which is full of water. Organizations have changed, methods have perforce had to be altered, but the Lord has always given the Word, and great has been the company of them that published it. Old men, old in heart as in years, have periodically lamented at the vision they saw of Popular Preachers ceasing to be, but, happily, it transpired that the gloomy vision was a

vain vision. The Lord has never wanted a man to stand before Him. Nor will He ever want such a man. We may say that we do not see where they are coming from, but, come they will. God has all sorts of doors through which to bring them in.

Each age has its favourite types of Popular Preaching, and each age has its needs met. What suited apostolic days would not suit now. What suited ' the ages of faith ' would not suit now. What suited Lutheran days would not suit now. What suited the Puritan days would not suit now. What suited Wesley's days would not suit now. ' God fulfils Himself in many ways.' And we may confidently believe that God will send to the world a bright succession of preachers who will engage men's ears and win their hearts to the end of the age.

Such Popular Preaching as we are commending is deeply rooted and centred in the Bible as the Word of God, and this furnishes another reason for the perennial effectiveness of this method. The Bible is contemporaneous with all time. If it is God's Word, as it assuredly is, it must address itself to all generations. And it does ! It speaks as directedly to the twentieth century as it did to the first century. There might have been no previous generations, so peculiarly does it speak to this generation. And this is but one evidence

of its miraculousness. Therefore a preacher who echoes this book must always have a word in season. There can be no legitimate fear of such preaching ever becoming worn out. 'The Word of the Lord abideth for ever,' and the preaching of it is imbued with its enduringness. Let a preacher leave the Bible and he forsakes his own mercy—in every sense of the word. Not least in this—that he cuts himself off from the fountain of effectiveness. His own thoughts will soon pall. Anecdotes will fail to interest. The gossip of the hour will perish with the hour. But if he cleaves to the Bible he will have a word which will attract and help.

There is something in the average man which makes him respond to such a man as he feels loves his soul. He may laugh at such. He may for a while disregard them. But sooner or later he will warm to him. Nothing makes preaching so abidingly popular as the hearer's realizing that the aim of the preacher is his everlasting good. This is yet a further guarantee of the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching. The preacher's heart has its answer in the heart of the hearer. And so long as there is in preaching the sure token that the benefit of the hearer is the dominant aim, so long will preaching be truly popular. The people know who's who in the pulpit. They do not fail a man who does not fail them. Preaching will have no competition in popular favour as long as

it manifests the savour of an altruistic purpose. The Church, speaking after the manner of man, lives by its Popular Pulpit. Nothing else can long supply its lack. What better theme can our prayers have than the maintenance of Popular Preaching? 'Give this in unimpaired effectiveness to the whole Church of Christ' may well be the united supplication of the people of God.

My plea for the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching is reinforced by the fact of its converting power. This agency is the supreme evangelistic agency. By this especially it is God's good pleasure 'to save them that believe.' We do well to be jealous for this. Thank God for any method which achieves conversion! But Popular Preaching is the method by which God elects chiefly to effect this miracle of grace. The vast majority of conversions take place under Popular Preaching. This assertion may be challenged, but I do not deem that it can be successfully challenged. This is a notable feature in the world-long history of conversions. The preaching of the gospel has always been the royal ordinance for man's salvation, and so it always will be. Let such preaching decline and conversions will decline. I dare to go further, and say, Let such preaching die out and conversions would all but die out. And this inference is dramatically warranted by evangelistic history.

In the seasons of evangelistic revival, Popular Preaching has always, or all but always, been in regnant evidence. Indeed, personally I have little faith in the enduring results of any revival which is not electric with Popular Preaching. What a pledge, an added pledge, is this of the perennial effectivness of such preaching! Such preaching will always lead souls to 'the Shepherd who died the sheep to redeem.'

Yet again, the help Popular Preaching renders to the Christian life is a still further evidence of its changeless effectiveness. Who can measure its edifying power? Who can fully express how it instructs the ignorant, cheers the disconsolate, gives hope to the desponding, renews the flaccid will, glorifies Christ, leads men to honour the Father? Take Popular Preaching out of the life of the average Christian and you leave him poor indeed. How many young men and women anticipate the message of the Sabbath pulpit for the way it will help them to 'put on the whole armour of God'! How many men and women spent with the temporal struggles of the week, eagerly await the consolation of 'the great book of consolation' as it is ministered from the Lord's-day pulpit! How many sorrow-laden souls look forward to the 'glad tidings' of 'the consolation of Israel' on the great day of the feast! Nothing can ever impair the effectiveness of Popular

Preaching when so regarded. By this means God loves to satisfy the longing soul. By this He delights to 'furnish a table in the wilderness.' Then let us stand up for the historic weapon against the adversary! Let the Church say of this agency, as David said of Goliath's sword, 'Give me this, for there is none like it.'

Again I say that I plead for no one type of Popular Preaching. The variety of the hearers has been wonderfully catered for in the history of such preaching. Each hearer knows the voice of the man who is his God-sent shepherd. Each recognizes the prophet who has the message which he needs. I delight in the historic and present-day variety of the Popular Pulpit. It is the gracious outcome of 'the manifold wisdom of God.' Never let us be narrow in this important matter. Let none vex his fellow herein. Let none excommunicate such a preacher as does not appeal successfully to him. Glory rather in this—that if a particular preacher has not the message you require, he speaks to the deepmost heart of your neighbour. When I gratefully realize the variegation of Popular Preaching I am convinced that the instrumentality will abide in power.

And truly Popular Preaching has had a wonderful record. We need only recall our own experience and observation of it, we whose day groweth towards evening, to realize this. What arresting

and enchanting voices we have heard, and all laden with the message of salvation! What prevailing ambassadors for Christ we have heard! What a cordial of hope for the future of the pulpit we have, many of us, in our own golden personal memories!

We have dwelt reiteratingly upon this matter of the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching because we have it in our heart to urge with ardour the necessity of maintaining this unique instrumentality. Signs, even in our own Church, are unhappily not wanting that some are disposed to deny its potency and to decry it. But it is our intense conviction that it has no rival. Scripture and history and present-day conditions, we think, abundantly demonstrate this. There is nothing the Churches should desire and entreat for more earnestly than the upkeep of the Popular Pulpit. Speaking after the manner of men, everything as to the prosperity of the Churches depends upon this. If the buildings are to be filled with worshipping congregations, if the financial estate of the Churches is to be made sure, if converts are to be gathered, if believers are to build upon their most holy faith, then Popular Preaching must be the effective secret.

We have only to survey the Churches to-day to discern that all this is indeed true. No fear need be entertained that the changing tastes of the

public will ever make Popular Preaching to lose its effectiveness. And no delusive hope need be cherished, by those who would have the Churches prosper by other means, that Popular Preaching will be superseded. Are there any signs to-day that this force is enfeebled ? Verily no. Generally speaking, when churches are filled to-day they are filled by Popular Preaching. Nothing else permanently fills them. Novel sensations may succeed for a while, but ere long they wither as the green grass. God foresaw what would for ever appeal to the likings as well as to the needs of man, and therefore He ordained that by ' the hearing of faith ' His gospel should win its widening way. It should rejoice us greatly that we have a God-given force which has changeless efficacy. We really need not tax our minds to invent new agencies. Novelties run a short course. The Churches have had pathetic experience of this, and they surely ought to have learned the costly lesson well.

Let us be bold to use our great instrumentality ! Have patient faith in it ! If the supply of preachers who have the ear of the people fail, or threaten to fail, there is an old specific to recover it. ' Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.' Has this, I wonder, a considerable place in the prayers of the Churches ? This is our greatest need ; it may

well be the burden of our never-ceasing supplications.

If any word of this Lecture shall invigorate the confidence of any one in the perennial effectiveness of Popular Preaching, I shall rejoice as one that has not laboured in vain nor spent his strength for naught. Methodism must ever hark back to what has been its ancestral potency. It must be determined that its history shall repeat itself. It must summon its choicest youthhood to this illustrious service. It must encourage such as are giving themselves to this service. It must decline to be diverted from its chiefest work. Where it has been diverted to the absorbing use of minor agencies it must 'ask for the old paths.' These paths will carry multitudes of happy pilgrims through the wilderness of this world; they shall go from strength to strength, and at length stand before God on the radiant heights of the heavenly Zion.

Chapter VI

PERVERSIONS OF POPULAR PREACHING

The counterfeit is always an enemy of the genuine. And unworthy forms of Popular Preaching have done more to prejudice right-minded people against Popular Preaching than anything else beside. We deeply sympathize with such prejudice, and deeply regret it. Unworthy presentations of a great doctrine have hindered the doctrine beyond all calculation. So unworthy uses of a noble ordinance have fatally fostered prejudice against that ordinance. This is of such importance to the matter before us that we shall do well to safeguard it. Let us separate the precious from the vile, the excellent from the meretricious. That the shining worth of noble Popular Preaching may be more clearly seen, let us observe some of the unworthy kinds of Popular Preaching which have sullied the glory of the Christian pulpit.

The devil is the ape of God and he will always seek to establish a Popular Pulpit according to his perverted mind. Diabolus sought to set up a

pulpit in the town of Mansoul which would prove popular, so John Bunyan graphically records in *The Holy War*. Diabolus also had his own popular gospel which he desired that the Mansoulians should hear and esteem. It was his ' last card,' and he still urges his ' last card ' upon the people of Mansoul. But Emmanuel would have none of it. And Emmanuel will have none of it to-day. Nor should Emmanuel's loyal people allow it, ' no, not for an hour.' Many have been the unworthy kinds of Popular Preaching which Satan, coming ' as an angel of light,' has inspired. Take the most fundamentally serious first. Certain Popular Preaching has had heterodoxy as its chief characteristic. This pulpit has been built upon ' the hill called error.' Nor is the era of that deplorable pulpit altogether passed away. The word ' heterodoxy ' has had many witticisms —often very feeble witticisms—levelled against it. It has been turned into a gibe. Let it be frankly admitted that it has been grievously wounded in the house of its friends. But still the Word represents a great and solemn reality. If the Catholic historic faith be true, then there is such a thing as heterodoxy. Orthodoxy may be travested and derided, but it is a noble reality.

This being so, what can be said too deprecatingly of the Popular Preaching which wins its

mean popularity by heterodoxy ? When a pulpiter secures the plaudits of shallow-pated hearers by assaults upon the truth of God, we cannot refrain from crying, with the Psalmist : ' What shall be given unto thee ? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue ? ' and to answer, ' sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.' Those who hold the faith do well to be angry in presence of such unworthiness. Silly folk may think such preachers clever, and such preachers doubtless will cordially endorse such an estimation, but earnest Christians will deem them to be ' false prophets.' When a preacher gathers popularity by bold assaults upon the Bible, by holding up venerable truths to ridicule, by representing the sanctifying ' blood ' as ' a common thing,' hot protests should be resoundingly uttered in the churches. A sceptic is surely out of place in a pulpit. Popularity purchased by such methods is despicable in the eyes of the people of God. Away with such popularity ! ' Truly the wrath of God will consume it ' ; ' into smoke shall it consume away.'

It cannot be estimated what easy-to-be-understood prejudice has been generated against Popular Preaching by such wicked travesties. By the suppression of evangelical truth a certain kind of popularity has been achieved in some pulpits. Sin has been explained away. A fair mask has

been made to cover its ugly face. The Fall has been gaily eliminated. Human nature has been flattered. Its ' dignity ' has been extolled. And all the while sincere hearers who knew the plague of their own heart have rightly anathematized such delusive teaching. It has, however, won a popularity for the preacher—a barren popularity and a short-lived popularity, but nevertheless a popularity. But what a deplorable popularity which is generated by whitewashing polluted human nature, by depicting sin as only a ' weakness,' or a necessary stage in human evolution, or an ' idiosyncrasy '! What a deplorable popularity which is secured by crying ' Peace, peace, when there is no peace ' ! When a preacher wanders from ' the fountain filled with blood,' and, instead of beseeching guilty sinners to turn to Jesus Crucified if they would be justified before God, pleads for Christian ethics as the way of salvation, how awful is the popularity he may win. He gets rid of ' the offence of the Cross,' but in doing so he parts with ' the only ground of all our hope.' There will be a popularity attached to such preaching, but think of its eternal issue ! How his poor deluded votaries, if they die in their sins, will curse the preacher who destroyed their souls when they stand ' far on the left, with horror,' before the Great White Throne !

There is a pulpit popularity which is attained

by practising the unholy arts of irreverence. True that it shocks and repels God-fearing people, but it is to be recognized that such a popularity exists. No holy and loving awe broods over such a pulpit. Well might the Lord exclaim to such a preacher, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' Alas when 'vain fellows' gather round a pulpit allured by the preacher's irreverence! When a preacher can speak of God and eternal things as he speaks of trivialities, who can measure the unworthiness of any popularity thus achieved? It is a proverb that Popular Preaching has been associated with unmitigated vulgarity. Alas, that it must be admitted! A coarsened pulpit is a corrupted pulpit. The shame of it, that the refined and refining gospel should be so prostituted! Vulgarity in the pulpit is a gross insult to holy things. We drive vulgarity out of our homes; we drive it out of society; let us drive it out of the pulpit. The preacher who caters for popularity by vulgarisms insults the people. If any are so dense that they do not perceive how they are being insulted, we reserve our pity for them, but we resent the insult none the less. I can well understand how vulgarity in the pulpit has brought Popular Preaching into ill odour with hearers who have delicacy of mind. Yet such should carefully consider that *such* Popular Preaching should not be allowed to

prejudice us against the Popular Preaching which is ordained of God.

A certain kind of sensationalism has been adopted by some fatuous preachers as an expedient to secure popularity. They have forgotten Dr. Johnson's dictum that nothing odd lasts. It is assuredly a well-verified dictum. How ridiculously petty such pulpiters have made themselves! In their best moments they must have been ashamed of their popularity, and blushed to think of the constituency who applaud them. What a popularity which is gained by queerness! —dressing queerly; talking queerly; cultivating eccentricities; playing clownish tricks. Surely to name it is to brand it with opprobrium. All 'attractions' which are adopted to make preaching popular are despicable, and in the white light of eternity they are revolting indeed. Dramatic actions, 'impressive' postures, tones of voice, and such like, at which fools may gape—wretched is the popularity they create. One would think the sacredness of the pulpit would have been a sufficient barrier to such abominations. It is nauseating to recall the varieties of methods which have been adopted to secure Popular Preaching—'falsely so called.' It lowers one's estimate of human nature to discover that there are people who will respond to such methods. What manner of people must they be in mind and in heart

with whom such preaching can be popular? Yet pulpit-charlatans have had a strange programme of 'attractions.' They have been relished because they have been 'comical.' They have had the semblance, though not the substance, of wit. They have called forth 'the laughter of fools.' They have successfully appealed to a diseased sense of humour. They have transmuted things eternal into jocoseness. They have made sacred things the food of fun. They have dealt with tragedies as if they were comedies.

Waiting classification with such are those, who by the announcement of strange titles, have sought to lure the people to their discourses. Again one marvels at the mentality of such as are successfully lured by such wiles. We can well understand such titles given to a low order of novel, or to a vulgar theatrical performance, but as given to a pulpit address they are revoltingly out of place. And often enough the sensational title has a strange anti-climax in the commonplace address. What an irony—an extraordinary title and an extraordinarily ordinary sermon! When the deluded people realize their delusion, the doom of the preachers does not linger. Their disillusionment is his retribution.

There is another nefarious method which has been pursued, to the pursuer's ultimate disquietude. I refer to persistent self-advertisement.

The personality of the would-be Popular Preacher has been kept incessantly before the public eye by means of the secular or the religious Press. ' Who is this ? ' people are prompted to inquire ; then they go out into the wilderness to see, and lo, ' a reed shaken by the wind.' There is a great peril to the preacher in much self-advertisement, or the advertisement of too-partial friends. If the advertisement prove to be out of keeping with that advertised, the public will infallibly discover it and resent it. You cannot hoodwink everybody always.

Undoubtedly, let it be plainly said, such proceedings have not infrequently been responsible for the revolt against Popular Preaching. Inferiority has been ambitious for the popularity to which it has had no legitimate right. Advertisement has awakened expectations which the reality has cruelly disappointed. Illicit reputations have been won for a while, then their illicitness has been discovered. Ambition unsustained by the essential qualifications has done much to discredit the Popular Pulpit. Cheap and evanescent popularity has sometimes been attained by a gratuitous pulpit-advertisement of sceptical teachers and their poison-laden books. Novelists whose novels have reeked with infidelity have had their circulation greatly furthered by their being made the theme of pulpit address. Ethical and religious

writers whose teachings make entirely against evangelical faith have had similar service rendered to them by the pulpit. In giving them such an advantage the preacher does a serious disadvantage to his pulpit and to himself. All popularity so wrought is as unworthy as it is fleeting.

' Current topics ' are sometimes supposed to be a fruitful source of pulpit popularity. They are considered ' up to date,' and in the obvious sense they are so, but not in the deeper and truer sense. When the pulpit is fed by the newspaper instead of the Bible, it lacks abiding nourishment ; it proves to be lean diet. People soon weary of hearing on Sundays the things they have been hearing all the week. It is the eternal and not the current which is the well-spring of permanent popularity. He purchases popularity too dearly who pays the price of a secularized pulpit.

We are sometimes assured that people, if preaching is to be popular, demand to hear that which is occupying their thoughts in their daily life. I believe this to be an entire delusion. The contrary is the fact ; they desire the preacher to lead them along lines of thought which are less familiar to them. Thus their intellectual interest is awakened, and better far, thus their souls and consciences are awakened. ' Preaching to the times ' is, at least, dubious work even from the sordid viewpoint of popularity. When Leighton

said, ' Whilst so many brethren are preaching to the times, it may be permitted to one brother to preach for eternity,' he disclosed the golden secret of that Popular Preaching upon whose fadeless bloom time cannot breathe.

Ere this bird's-eye view of unworthy kinds of Popular Preaching is shrouded in darkness I must add that all adjuncts of a questionable quality which are supposed to add popular influence to preaching are to be discredited. When a popish service environs the Protestant pulpit, though it may attract a few ecclesiastical Athenians who are on the look out for some new thing, it yet fails to invest the preaching with lasting popularity. When a gospel message is wedged in amid a sing-song entertainment, we gravely doubt its permanent popularity. And many other illustrations will readily occur to those who hear me or who read these pages. Our deep conviction is that the Nemesis of unworthy methods of pulpit popularity is their impermanence. Inquiry and observation will, we believe, abundantly justify this avowment.

Could we but reach the ear of our younger ministerial brethren, we would plead with them to frown down by their own example, all attempts to cheapen and discredit Popular Preaching. It is a serious thing to impair such a sacred function. To tarnish the pulpit is to fight against God and

to vex His Holy Spirit. God is jealous over the pulpit with a great jealousy. And to dim its fair glory is to incur His righteous wrath. I rejoice to believe that in this matter the great majority of preachers desire to be 'workers together with God.' I believe that the determination to keep up the nobleness of the pulpit was never more general among its occupants, but it is of supreme importance that the peril should be indicated and guarded against. Temptations in this direction were never more rife than now. Such multitudes are indifferent to the Churches. The moral and spiritual temperature of the times is sadly low. It is often hard to gain the ear of the people. Hence may all too easily arise the temptation to tune the pulpit to unworthy methods. But the temptation must be sturdily and strenuously and ceaselessly resisted. The resistance may offend some, but we are persuaded that it will be approved of many, and assuredly it will be acceptable to God.

We are convinced that a noble-toned pulpit will achieve a solid and enduring popularity. We esteem the intellectual and spiritual calibre of the common people too highly to believe that they will widely respond to ignoble pulpit methods. The great popular ministries of modern England have been of a high order. It is a slander to affirm that clownish conduct in the pulpit is

admired of the multitude. It is only the baser sort who are appealed to by such antics. How refreshing it is to observe that great assemblies of the common people have been retained in the circuit chapels and mission halls of our own denomination by ministries which have been refined and instructive and spiritual. The happy moral of such instances cannot be too much laid to heart.

Young preachers may have every confidence that *quality* is appreciated by the multitude. We are informed at times that preachers must come down to the level of the people—as if that level were low indeed. But we protest that it is not so low as some vain-dreamers dream. Even if it were, it is the happy task of the preacher to lift them to a higher level. And this can be done where it is required, and it has frequently been done. It is delightful how thoroughly taste and culture can be appreciated even by such as do not naturally possess them. I would fain encourage young preachers to give of their *best* selves to the Popular Pulpit. If they give themselves royally, they will have a royal reward here at the hands of man, and, when their work is done, an infinitely more royal reward at the hands of their gracious God.

My urgent word, therefore, to my younger brethren is that they aim at a goodly quality of

Popular Preaching, and at that only. Let them scorn inferior expedient. Let them never ' Sell the truth to serve the hour.' It is enough to fill the ambition of any preacher to keep the people's pulpit uncorrupted and honourable ; to make it worthy of the God who hath for ever established it.

Even more earnestly would we entreat the multitude of those who attend upon the ministry of preaching to strive to uphold its sublimest traditions. Let them pay no heed to tricks which are supposed to be popular. Let them be self-respecting in this matter. Let them consider themselves as insulted when unworthy constraints are applied to them. The safeguarding of the pulpit is largely in the hands of the people. And they may be trusted to fulfil their trust.

And, if possible, yet more ardently would we entreat the people of the Churches to prize Popular Preaching, to prize it as the chief good of the Churches. We would repeat and re-repeat that nothing can compensate for its decline. If this function is to be kept in its primary place, it is the multitude of the people who must do it. They must not allow ' officialism,' or organization, or entertainment, or anything else, to overshadow the pulpit. All else may be very good, but it is secondary ; the pulpit is invested with a glory that excelleth. All Churches decline which allow the Popular Pulpit to decline. Their decline may

be arrested, but ultimately nothing can prevent it. The trumpet needs to wax louder and louder which gives warning of this peril.

Methodism, in this regard, has special need to keep its own vineyard. The history of Methodism enjoins it to do so. Popular Preaching is essential to our Church almost above other Churches. We have nothing adequate to offer the people in its place. Hence we press the matter upon the special consideration of the people called Methodists. For, let it be again asserted, the chief responsibility in this matter is with the rank and file of our people. ' Like people, like priest ' is a law here as everywhere. ' My people love to have it so ' is a principle which, for good or evil, must prevail. If the people of a Church demand a noble type of Popular Preaching, it will go well with that Church. But if they are indifferent to the Popular Pulpit they will, soon or late, wake up to the fact that they have fatally marred their own inheritance.

It may be frankly said that if Popular Preaching is to be the effective and predominant element of the Church, then preachers must not be overweighted with lesser tasks. They must not be deprived of all leisure. They must not be made Jacks of all trades. Secular duties must not prevent the brooding and sanctifying silence of the mount. Bishop Creighton dreaded ' a secularized

clergy,' and 'the business man clergyman' gave him great searchings of heart. Let our people adopt a similar attitude. It is easy to wear a preacher down day by day with a host of petty engagements, and then to complain that his pulpit on the Lord's day is dull and uninspiring. A deep and general conviction on this matter would result in immense advantage to the pulpits of our Churches.

In closing this chapter I would, as at the beginning, ask that counterfeit Popular Preaching be clearly and constantly distinguished from the true and God-approved Popular Preaching. 'What is the chaff to the wheat?' Do not let a godly antipathy to the unworthy allow us to depreciate the worthy. Surely this is a word in season. The salvation of the people so largely depends upon Popular Preaching that it is all-essential that it be kept at its spiritual best. Pentecostal in aim and in characteristics, it will be crowned with Pentecostal success. The gospel has it in its very nature to gain the ear of the people. It was so on the Day of Pentecost, and it is so still. Let us keep that divine Ideal before us and God will work with us to fulfil His purposes of grace.

A pulpit which endears itself to the people is the Church's greatest asset. If preachers and people unite to establish such a pulpit, they will with joy and gladness see their efforts crowned

with success. The Popular Preaching which eschews unworthy methods, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, aims only at enriching the lives of them that hear, will be ' full with the blessing of the Lord.' May all that is unworthy of the pulpit, and of the pulpit's Lord, shrivel away, and may the pulpit of the universal Church flourish, and bear fruit abundantly to the glory of Him who gave the Word and enabled His servants to utter it !

Chapter VII

CONCOMITANTS OF POPULAR PREACHING

A BEAUTIFUL picture should have a beautiful frame—not a frame which shall draw away attention from the picture, but which shall add adornment to the picture. And Popular Preaching should have suitable and effective concomitants. The gem is enhanced by an appropriate setting. So it is with Popular Preaching. Such preaching has, unhappily, too often been rendered less efficacious by the neglect of a worthy environment. 'This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone,' is a monition which might well have been addressed to many a Popular Preacher.

Let us consider some of the things which should, as with a sacred inevitableness, accompany Popular Preaching. The scenery of such preaching, if I may use the term, is of weighty importance. The very style of the building in which the discourse is delivered may happily affect the discourse. It is matter for thankfulness that architecture has of late years been brought to the help of worship. Beautiful buildings ought to conduce to beautiful services.

I fear that pulpits have often trammelled the preacher. They have tended to unnaturalness and stiltedness in preaching. The only pulpit mentioned in the Bible is a platform. That is a significant fact. Adam Clarke slyly comments upon Ezra's pulpit thus : ' This is the first intimation we have of a pulpit, or structure of this kind. But we must not suppose it was anything similar to those Tubs or Barrels ridiculously set up in churches and chapels, in which a preacher is nearly as much confined, during the time of preaching, as if he were in the stocks.' I once heard Henry Ward Beecher animadvert upon pulpits in this racy manner. ' When the hindrances to religion go, pulpits will go. No man would plead for a life from a pulpit. I regard pulpits as designed after the model of a candlestick and very often the man in the pulpit is like a candle—a great deal of wax and precious little light.'

Whilst, with some reservations, accepting these views of pulpits, the great consideration is that the preacher should always seek to make the best of his standing place, whether it be pulpit or platform. His manner of occupying it will be either a gracious help or a disabling hindrance to his preaching.

The preacher's reverence in the pulpit may in itself be a means of grace to the congregation.

Away with the revolting and slanderous notion that irreverence of manner is an aid to popularity. If it were, let popularity perish for ever! But it is not. I refuse to attribute such base likings to the people. History and experience refute this slander cast upon our congregations. The preacher should be careful as to his very entry into the pulpit. The earliest impression of the congregation may count very much for good or for evil. Let the preacher shun all self-consciousness. Let him pray it away from him. I would say to every preacher, Let your urgent cry be, 'O hide this self from me.' Fight the demon of egoism and God will give you victory. It is a sad detriment to preaching if the preacher stalks into the pulpit with an air which is tantamount to exclaiming, 'Here comes a man who can illuminate you benighted ones' or if he rolls in pompously, like a stately ship at sea. Equally unfortunate is it if the preacher ascends the pulpit with such an appearance of sphinx-like profundity that the people might deem him to be a philosopher—unless they knew him well. Nor is it good when the preacher hangs his head like an animated bulrush, or looks utterly abashed, like a culprit caught in the act. All oppressive self-consciousness is to be deprecated in a preacher. To go into the pulpit smiling, like a coy and flirtsome maiden, or frowning, like an irritated schoolboy, is to create a prejudice

which may quench the profiting of the congregation. Let the preacher be himself, and that self chastened and mellowed and beautified by the indwelling Spirit of God.

The preacher's personal appearance is a detail which cannot be ignored by him and will not be ignored by the people. There is a danger in these days that we have too much of the free and easy in such matters. Our dread of ritualism has led us to an extreme which, in my judgement, is more serious still. I may be severely old-fashioned, but I decidedly object to gay raiment upon the preacher in the pulpit. 'What went ye into the wilderness to see?' 'A man clothed in soft raiment' is a sadly accurate reply which might often be made. After all, something is due to *convention*. And something is due to the good taste of the congregation. And it is undoubted that the average congregation resents coloured coats in the pulpit. When St. James contemplated there coming into the assembly 'a man with a gold ring in fine clothing,' I cannot believe that he entertained the possibility of that man being the preacher. The first law of classical oratory was to 'conciliate your audience,' and pulpit dress may tend to such conciliation. I shall not be easily persuaded that a jacket is a suitable attire for a preacher in the pulpit. Nor shall I easily be persuaded that a refined congregation is

of that mind. Frankly, we touch at this point one of the disadvantages of the Free Church Pulpit as compared with the Pulpit of the Church of England. The clergyman's pulpit attire is helpful to the average man's worship. The subject need not be pursued, but all preachers may well consider how pulpit garb may add to, or diminish, the helpfulness of public worship.

Nor is it beneath the dignity of a Fernley Lecture to insist on other of the minor concomitants of Popular Preaching. That the preacher should *speak up* is a consummation devoutly to be wished. No marvel if much excellent preaching is unpopular because it cannot be heard. And equally credible is it that a whole service may be unpopular for the same reason. The opening hymn of the service should be announced that every one can hear. Nothing is more irritating to a congregation than a mumbling individual in the pulpit. It is simply inexcusable in a young preacher, and it is hard to excuse in an old preacher. Even the deaf old man or woman, who usually sits where it is most difficult to hear, should not be vexed by a preacher's inaudibility.

Elocution is assuredly a necessary adjunct of Popular Preaching. The older generation of preachers set us an admirable example in this important matter. They studied the hymns they read and the Scriptures they read. I fear there has

been a deterioration among preachers in this regard. If it be so, it is greatly to be regretted, for pulpit elocution is an immense aid to worship. Some of us remember how Dr. Punshon, Richard Roberts, Josiah Pearson, Charles Garrett, and many another of 'the former prophets,' rendered their hymns with such emphasis that the reading of the hymn had the value of an exposition of the hymn.

Is it possible to overstate the value of pulpit prayer? I believe we can hardly argue it with adequacy. Many of us recall the prayers of Mr. Spurgeon and Dr. Parker, and many another of our Popular Preachers. Not infrequently the prayers transcended the sermon, both spiritually and intellectually. In this matter the Free Churches need to be very solicitous. The demand for a liturgy within our bounds is very significant, and cannot wisely be ignored. But I believe it would seldom arise were pulpit prayers more helpful.

The reading of the Scriptures in the pulpit is another vital matter. If that portion of our worship be unimproved a mighty opportunity is lost. What possibilities it holds! Noble public reading of Scripture is equivalent to an exposition of Scripture. Long years ago I heard the eloquent Bishop Simpson preach a pathetic and powerful sermon, but listening to Josiah Pearson's reading

of the lesson in that same service was such a delectation that I would have left the service greatly enriched even if I had not heard the bishop's sermon. Let every preacher honour the Word of God in the pulpit by reading it in an edifying manner, in a clear voice, with appropriate emphasis, and with utmost reverence !

The *delivery* of the sermon is of tremendous importance. Every one should be able to hear the text announced, and there should always *be* a text, and the text should always be stuck to. Moreover, the whole sermon should be capable of being heard. It is no sign of a preacher being a thinker that he is inaudible. Some have seemed to think that it is the token of a philosopher that he should mumble. But this is a complete delusion. Speak up, preacher, will we ever say !

I am personally persuaded that the less manuscript a preacher carries with him into the pulpit the better. In the average instance, it is a hindrance to the highest pulpit effect. Dr. Chalmers and Canon Liddon wrought mightily in the pulpit despite a manuscript, but I may be permitted the commonplace comment that Dr. Chalmerses and Canon Liddons are passing rare, and that even they might have increased their effectiveness by discarding their manuscripts. The delivery of a sermon is of vital moment to its highest spiritual effectiveness. Dr. Dale and Dr. Alexander Whyte,

as their splendid biographies disclose, regretted, in later life, that they had not attended to this more assiduously. And these great preachers were as far removed from mean ideas of popularity as men could be. A sermon, by reason of being delivered either too low or too loudly, may miss its influence upon some soul in the congregation. The modulation of a voice may be the salvation of a soul. All such vocal perils should be vigilantly avoided. A preacher should beware of 'the thunder and whisper style' of preaching—now roaring and then descending to a dramatic murmur. The habit of dropping the voice is irritating to hearers, who are thereby led to suspect that the preacher is deliberately keeping some of his best sayings from their hearing. Animation of voice and of gesture are highly valuable adjuncts to preaching. By paying reasonable attention to both, a preacher may have great recompense of reward.

In speaking of the concomitants of Popular Preaching, it may be well to throw in a word concerning the preacher both prior to, and subsequent to, his appearance in the pulpit. In view of his sacred work presently to be undertaken, it is important that the preacher have his *direct* preparation for the pulpit promptly done. It is sadly preventive of the best pulpit influence to be engaged upon literary preparation up to service,

or almost up to service, time. Mechanical preparation should, at all costs, be executed early. The latest hour before worship should be set free for other and even more important uses. When a preacher, through delayed literary preparation, has an agitated, burdened mind, and a perturbed spirit, and thus hurries to the pulpit, the chances are that he will not regain his lost calmness. I know, with deep appreciation how busy is the life of most preachers, but I feel sure that the busiest can, by rigid economy of the moments and by forethought, avoid leaving his direct preparation for the pulpit to within a short space of the hour of prayer. To rush into the vestry just ere the clock strikes, and to select the hymns and con the announcements, will be much more likely to induce perspiration than inspiration. Moreover, fussiness is contagious, and the officials may catch the contagion : then the effects will be woeful indeed.

So much depends on the self-preparation of the preacher. A quiet session with his Bible before service may graciously give tone, happiest tone, to him and to the whole worship. It will calm the preacher's nerves. It is a veritable tonic. It suffuses his soul with heaven's tranquil help. A spirituality it will breathe upon him which will be outbreathed through him upon the congregation. The preacher's private prayer before preaching

may do wonders during the service. I never forget what a venerable old saint once said to me : ' I often see directions given to preachers, but I never see them recommended to pray more that they may preach better.' It was, and is, a word in due season. All truly great preachers have been, and are, men of incessant prayer. All gifts dwindle into insignificance when compared with prayer. Coldness, lack of tenderness, tameness—deficiency of prayer is a prolific root of such evils.

The preacher does well, prior to his service, to mentally anticipate the whole scene. The hymn-singing, the prayers, the Scripture-reading, the sermon—let him fore-fancy it all, and that in the light of ' the judgement seat of Christ.' Let him realize the daily life of the congregation—its toils and cares, its temptations, its disappointments, its joys, its struggles after righteousness. Let him think of the young people. Let him think of the old folk. Let him think of the prosperous and of the unsuccessful. Let him review the new converts, the backsliders, and the varied types the congregation may include.

Nor must I omit to say how greatly a spiritual book may inspire a preacher and help to heighten the helpfulness of his service. To read in the Lives of the early Methodist preachers, as Dr. Parker used to do ; to dip into a Christian biography ; to peruse some of the pages of John

Bunyan and William Law; to read William Arthur's *Tongue of Fire*; or to follow the profound and ardent pages of Thomas Goodwin, or Richard Baxter, or C. H. Spurgeon, or Alexander Whyte, is to take fire from and to the altar of God.

Even the preacher's diet before preaching will have a determining effect upon his preaching. A hearty meal has often prevented a hearty service. And a service may be devoid of power because of light talk in the vestry before the service. Surely such conditions bear directly and powerfully upon the success or the failure of Popular Preaching. A reverential service is an essential concomitant of Popular Preaching. It could easily be shown that such a service has invariably been a characteristic of the best Popular Preaching. Canon Liddon's noble preaching was enshrined right nobly in the splendid services of St. Paul's Cathedral. To many the service reinforced the sermon as effectively as the sermon reinforced the majestic service.

But, where the lofty environment of a cathedral and its services were lacking, Popular Preachers have generally secured a reverent service as the fitting and essential environment of their sermon. It is a mistake to suppose that a right-spirited Popular Preacher has been oblivious of everything but his sermon. Where this has unhappily been the case, it must justly be regarded

as exceptional. The great Popular Preachers of Methodism in the last century were notably careful as to the reverence of their worship. Their prayers were as noble as their discourses. Their Scripture-reading corresponded to their prayers. Everything in their pulpit-bearing corresponded likewise. How well some of us remember such examples as Morley Punshon, Richard Roberts, Josiah Pearson, Charles Garrett ! These princes of the pulpit made the whole service dignified, reverential worship ; and it enhanced the highest effect of their popular preaching. The great Popular Preachers of Scotland were examples of the same characteristic. Dr. Boyd, of St. Andrews, was a pulpit-genius, and one of Scotland's most popular preachers, yet no man could have bestowed more meticulous care on every item of the service than did he. Dr. Macgregor, of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, was a thrilling Popular Preacher, but like his friend, Dr. Boyd, he bestowed elaborate care on the whole detail of his services—so much so that they were frequently described as ' ritualists.' Similarly punctilious concerning the whole service were the great Nonconformist Popular Preachers of the same period in England. Mr. Spurgeon's service was a reverential and glowing unity. Dr. Parker's service was chaste and beautiful throughout. So also was that of Dr. Dale. So was that of Dr. Henry Allon, of

Islington. And many another instance might be adduced.

I believe that the high and solemn importance of this consideration almost defies exaggeration. The deepmost influence of a sermon may be spoiled by a slipshod service. To associate this with Popular Preaching is to traduce Popular Preaching. Deplorable exceptions do but prove the rule. It could be argued with historical and biographical accuracy that reverence of worship and popularity of preaching have been strikingly proportioned in the history of the Christian pulpit.

I would plead that none should be prejudiced against Popular Preaching by the gratuitous report that it has been generally associated with an irreverent service. It is a slanderous report. And I would yet more earnestly plead that our people shall always demand, and imperatively demand, that Popular Preaching shall always be blended with a refined and reverent worship. Do not let us be too easily scared by the cry of 'ritualism,' nor let our blood freeze if they call us 'churchy.' I am persuaded that the Free Churches cannot be too punctilious upon this matter. Reverence and beauty in public worship create an atmosphere which is specially favourable to worshipping 'in spirit and in truth.' The poor respond cordially to reverently conducted worship. The uneducated give it similar response.

Cultivated people are peculiarly appealed to by it. Young people in these days deeply appreciate it. In fact, it may be said that public taste demands it.

It is but due to the spirit of Catholicity that we should acknowledge how much we owe to the example of the Church of England in this matter. Let us gladly and thankfully acknowledge our indebtedness to any Church ! Assuredly nothing has been more characteristic of the revival in the Church of England than its happy blend of a beautiful service and Popular Preaching. Wide liberty must be accorded to preachers and to congregations. We must not lightly judge each other. The type of service may well be adapted to local preference, but a reverential service is spiritually indispensable. ' Let everything be done decently and in order ' is a rubric which is of universal and perpetual authority. No happier consummation could be desired than that preachers and congregations should unite to observe that healthsome rubric. All that helps to a reverential service helps the best issues of Popular Preaching. It is not well to despise what some describe as trifles. Punctuality in beginning and in ending the service. Calm order in all the worship. No irreverence in the pulpit and none in the pews. No fussiness either in the preacher or the stewards. No wandering eyes. No unbridled tongues. All that is done wrought as in the sight of God and of

the holy angels. Where such a service is, and only where it is, will Popular Preaching have its authentic environment. If the salvation of the hearer is the purpose of preaching, then it is impossible to yield too prayerful attention to all that appertains to the worship.

It may be added that an invaluable concomitant of Popular Preaching is pastoral visitation. The term pastoral must be emphasized. Pastoral visitation is the social shepherding of souls. It is not the mutual retailing of gossip, nor of anecdotes, nor of compliments. Not sourly, but sweetly, it seeks to follow up the eternal message of the pulpit. It brings the preacher's heart into close contact with the heart of the people so that when again the preacher mounts the pulpit the people's love toward him is deepened. The pulpit and the pastorate should be bells of sweet accord.

So jealous are we for the function of Popular Preaching, that we urge these invaluable concomitants, and might have urged yet more. We fear anything which might hinder God's great ordinance, and we rejoice in that which will augment its power. The Methodist Church has especial need to watch this important function. By it alone it can ultimately live and thrive. It is no depreciation of other forms of service to affirm this. All that makes this instrumentality spiritually effective is to be welcomed and cultivated.

Dr. Dale, in his delightful *Lectures on Preaching*, puts the matter from the highest standpoint, which may well be pondered by preachers and by people. 'To be the ally of Christ in His great endeavour to save the world; with Him to assert the authority of the throne and law of God; with Him to support human weakness in its vacillating endeavours to do the divine will; to inspire the sinful with trust in the divine mercy; to console sorrow; to awaken in the hearts of the poor, the weak, and the desolate the consciousness of their relations to the Infinite and Eternal God; to exalt and dignify the lives of old men and maidens, young men and children, by revealing to them the things unseen and eternal which surround them now, and the mysterious, awful, glorious life which lies beyond death—this is a great work. There is nothing on earth comparable to it. Whatever genius you have, whatever learning, whatever native moral force, whatever energy of spiritual inspiration, will all find their freest and loftiest service in the work to which you are consecrated. And in the ministry even the humblest faculties, if used with devout earnestness, may, through alliance with the power of God, achieve great results.'

Chapter VIII

CONSTRAINTS OF POPULAR PREACHING

What is it that makes Popular Preaching essential? What is its deepest rationale? Why is it simply indispensable to the Christian Church? In other words, what constrains the Popular Preacher, so that he can do no other than be such? It is well to attempt to reach basal considerations. Let us endeavour to get to bedrock. A cause so sacred and so immortal demands sacred and immortal constraints.

We do well to assign the value of the soul of man as a primary constraint. They can never preach aright to men who are not driven by the Spirit. And only they are driven by the Spirit who realize the infinite worth of man. Any Popular Preaching which is constrained by a lesser idea is a mockery of God and a mockery of God's creature, man. An anthropology lies at the back of our preaching. 'What is man?' is a tremendous inquiry. The Bible, which is crowded with always-relevant questions, has no profounder inquiry than this. And the Bible, which teems with infallible answers to great questions, has no

solution of any inquiry which is more profound and far-reaching than its answer to this question. 'Man became a living soul' by the express and deliberate creation of God. Surely, reason says, if man is a living soul, he must be an immortal soul. And what reason surmises revelation declares by inference, if not by direct assertion. The soul is the standard of the man. It *is* the man. He sheds his body, but he never sheds his soul. I believe in the natural immortality of the soul, though it is not my business to argue it now. I believe it for many reasons, but chiefly I believe that the redemption of man by God the Son implies it. I cannot conceive of the subject of a divine redemption being less than a naturally immortal being.

But, be this as it may, how stupendous is the conception of an immortal soul. Supposing it were only that man is a possibly immortal soul, still how stupendous is the idea! I know how impossible it is adequately to conceive of immortality, but we are intellectually defied by all the greatest entities, and, indeed, by many of the meanest—to our intellectual humiliation. But the question is not the clarity of our conception, but the reality of the fact. 'Man has for ever,' says Browning's Grammarian exultantly, but it may be said woefully. It may be a tragic fact, with more matter for tears than the most awful tragedy

which ever appalled an assembly. To realize that every man is an immortal soul is to make Popular Preaching an inexorable necessity. It extorts the fiery cry, ' Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets,' and the yet more flaming avowal, ' Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' Brothers, this sense of individual immortality is a burning constraint to Popular Preaching. Each man, rich or poor, cultured or ignorant, refined or gross, young or old, serious or flippant, has ' a never-dying soul to save.' *This* will loose the preacher's tongue. *This* will make his tongue a tongue of fire. *This* will make him address himself to all, not as a philosopher, or a rhetorician, or a self-seeker, or a mere promoter of denominationalism, but as a herald, as ' the Lord's messenger,' as an ' ambassador of God.' *This* will inspire him to cry, ' We preach Christ crucified '—the only cry which can bring salvation to man's never-dying soul. Only let immortality possess a preacher's mind and heart, only let him realize that his hearers must their everlasting days with fiends or angels spend, and you assure a Popular Pulpit against which the insurgent gates of hell shall never prevail.

What a constraint of Popular Preaching we have in the gospel which is ours to proclaim ! The evangelical message is aeonian. Like the soul of man, it is immortal. It is, according to Scripture,

'an everlasting gospel.' We have an immortal gospel for immortal man! Is not this enough to fire an angel's tongue? I love the grand old expression, 'the plan of salvation.' Some 'modern' minds demur to this, and even deny it, but their doing so leaves upon my mind an impression of their modernness rather than of their mentality. The gospel of our salvation is a 'plan.' The Puritan loved to call it a 'device.' It is the very issue of divine pondering. And its wondrousness shows its divine origin.

By 'the blood of the Cross' universal man may be saved for ever! Every man who will believe the 'glad tidings' may be pardoned, and may have an incontrovertible witness within him that he is pardoned. Every man may be justified before God, which is more far than being pardoned; he may be set in a permanently felicitous relation to a once-offended God. Every man may be 'born again,' his whole nature changed, by the power of the Spirit of God. Every man may be made holy by the interior working of the Holy Spirit who is given to dwell within him who believes on the crucified Saviour. Every man may, in his turn, become an evangelist, winning his fellows to the Lord that brought them by the energy of the Spirit who dwelleth in believing souls. Every man, when his earthly course is run, may attain 'the desired haven,' the everlasting holiness, and

happiness, and service which is called heaven—'the Sabbath rest which remaineth to the people of God.' Is not this a glorious gospel? Does it not palpitate with the grace of God? Is it not adapted to every creature? Is it not the birthright of every creature?

This is indeed a constraint of Popular Preaching—to proclaim 'the golden offers of Shaddai.' This, burning and blazing in his soul, will make any preacher popular, and every preacher popular. This gives him 'a speech of fire,' and all sorts of people will listen to such speech. Nothing could make the universal pulpit so popular as a revival of gospel preaching. Our gospel is so vast that all types of men are needed to unfold it. Our constituency is all sorts and conditions of men, so there is scope for all varieties of preachers. Each preacher is needed to reach all men. The pulpit cannot fail to be popular if it is resonant with the gospel of eternal salvation. It will be corn in famine-time. It will be 'as ice in harvest.' Where preaching has declined in popularity, it is generally where the gospel has been eliminated. Men respond to the gospel. Even such as decline it recognize its validity. Even rejectors have the stinging secret of its verity in their conscience.

We cannot be content with pleasing a clique, or tickling the fancy of the flippant, or leaving a vivid impression of our personal cleverness, if

once we see the genius of the gospel. We must, as moved by 'a fiery instigation,' endeavour to make all men see its wonders. Nothing will so effectually keep up the bright succession of preachers to the common people as a vision of the gospel of 'the common salvation.' There will always be Popular Preaching as long as the preachers are eager to cry, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' A realized gospel guarantees a people's pulpit.

The wealth of the Bible is another constraint of Popular Preaching. What a book we have with which to teach universal man! It throbs with divine inspiration. It is quick in every part with the Spirit of God. As Henry Rogers finely said, it is such a book as man could not have made if he would, and would not have made if he could. It is verily what it claims to be—'The Word of God.' What a book it is! 'The sun never sets on its gleaming page.' Here is food for every mind and heart. Here is God revealed. Here is 'the mystery of Christ.' Here is free and full and everlasting salvation for all who will receive it. Here is comfort for all woes. Here the enchanting founts of happiness and mirth. It is the universal book.

Let this book be unfolded and you will always have a Popular Pulpit in the Churches. You cannot but have, for this reason among many

reasons—that a preacher who revels in his Bible cannot fail to be popular. He will have such interesting and always pertinent things to tell. He will have something for everybody—for 'the woman of a sorrowful spirit,' for the children, for the old people, for young men and maidens in their gaieties and in their sadness, for the Christian and for the man who is 'a stranger to the blood which bought his pardon on the tree.' Yes, the preacher who not only possesses his Bible, but is possessed by his Bible, will always have a word in due season for men, and men will want to hear him.

Whenever the Bible has been rediscovered there has been a revival of Popular Preaching. The barren seasons of the pulpit have been seasons when the Bible has ceased to glow in the preacher's eyes and sing in his enraptured soul. A revival in these days of devotion to the Bible would do more than aught else to popularize the pulpit. Popular Preaching would then have a constraint from two quarters. The people would crave for it. They would cry to the preacher, Is there any message from the Lord? They would beg him to tell them what is in the Wondrous Book. They would be like the enkindled folk of the old time who were willing to linger by the hour whilst the Book was expounded. And the preacher would long to tell the people his latest discoveries in the book from

which new light and truth is ever breaking forth. The great popular preachers were saturated with the Bible. They flamed with enthusiasm for it. They owed their own souls to it. They had found their Saviour there, and the Saviour of all men there. So preaching was essentially popular. And so it will ever be if it is instinct with the living and active 'Word of God.' History verifies this assertion. Methodist history proves it up to the hilt. It is reversion to the old Book which ensures the popularity of preaching.

O for a passionate love of the Bible, alike in preachers and in people! A thousand blessings would ensue, and not the least that Popular Preaching would be restored throughout the lands. The Spirit of God gives a mighty 'urge' to preachers and to people when the Word of God is prized and honoured. Let all who are pessimistic about the pulpit know this, that the glory of the pulpit can never fade when the pulpit rings true to the Bible. This is the vital necessity. There is no compensation for lack of this. Against this there is no law.

When we think of what John Bunyan called 'the glory of a converted state,' we have a powerful constraint to Popular Preaching. Shall a man be converted? What an unspeakable benefit we confer upon him! May any man be converted? The most indifferent? The grossest? The most

alienated by wicked works? Verily it is so. Then who would not run, seeing he hath such tidings? This lays upon a preacher a glorious 'necessity' to preach the Gospel to every creature. Popular Preaching there must be, and there will be, if such a gracious possibility for all men is realized by preachers and by people. Is it possible to overcolour 'the glory of a converted state'? Of a truth, it is not. Think of some of the golden elements of that state: we think all too little of them in these days. A sinner forgiven all his transgressions! Who can fathom the depths or scale the heights held in that expression of our Lord, 'the remission of sins?' All the evil that he hath done never to be mentioned to him. Freely and for ever forgiven. 'All that debt' discharged for him by the Redeeming Lord. Absolute peace with God and with his sinful past, and with his menacing future. If all men may have such glorious beatitude how can we but preach the gospel? Righted with God for evermore! 'Justified by faith.' The smile of a Reconciled God making summer in the soul! Not a cloud between the happy soul and its thrice Holy God! That this is the possible happiness of all men makes a preacher's feet swift to tell the good news. The man's whole nature changed, so changed that it is nothing less than a new birth! Corruption made 'whiter than snow.' Falsity

charmed into truth ! Bitterness into love ! Unselfed and inchristed ! Fears lost in immortal hope ! O, the glory of such a state ! Once a preacher sees this ' heavenly vision ' and he must needs publish it, even with his latest breath. And when we know also that every converted man or woman receives the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit, amid His sevenfold gifts, gives power for service : then the wonder grows and becomes an ecstasy. Every convert may become an evangelist. Every lamp alight may kindle another lamp. Let this be realized by a preacher, and what a constraint it is to Popular Preaching !

As we contemplate these high and holy constraints they radiantly multiply upon us. Consider what a constraint to this grand work it is that thereby common life may be so gloriously enriched. The Gospel of Christ is a gospel of life, in the widest conception of the term. It enriches the physical life. There is a true and scriptural ' Christian Science.' The Holy Spirit is a physical elixir. It enriches home-life. There is no apologetic more invincible than beautiful home-life. One of Christ's greatest achievements is the Christian home. The evangelical Gospel is in truth the only social gospel. O the homes the gospel has transfigured ! It has transformed social hells into heavens. And it is doing it every day all over the world. Let the people have the

gospel preached unto them when it is such a social factor !

And can we easily exaggerate the intellectual enrichment which the gospel effects ? The half has never been told of the wonders it has wrought upon the mind of man. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the mind. And where He is received there is an illumination which is of priceless worth. Ignorance is always a foe to man. Knowledge is always power. The intellectual benefits of the gospel are an insuperable argument for the gospel. Justice has yet to be done to this argument. And it may be said, not boastingly, but gratefully, that Methodism has wrought educational benefits, especially among the poor, which have been pearls of great price. Popular Preaching has no slender constraint in that circumstance. Perhaps we are too apt to forget what a strong eschatological constraint there is to Popular Preaching. Eschatology is a department of theology too much neglected in our day. Yet what a place it has in Holy Scripture and especially what a place it had on the lips of our Incarnate Lord ! To save a soul from death is surely motive enough to inspire a preacher. The splendid possibility should thrill us. The glorious certainty of achieving this if we lead men to Christ should yet more abundantly thrill us. There is assuredly a ' wrath to come.' Let no craving for minute

definitions of it make us to ignore the terrible fact. Hell is a grim reality. And if the alarm is not sounded the blood of the lost will be required at the watchman's hands. But O the rapture of delivering men from 'the wrath to come'! Is not this a goad to the preacher? If this is not, what could be? If the common people are so in peril, then let the warning voice, which is the voice of truest friendship, sound upon them. Then there is the bright side of eschatology. We may bring men to heaven. Our preaching may lead them to everlasting life. The Gospel heard and believed will open the kingdom of heaven to all the weary travellers through 'the valley of the shadow of death.' 'The milk and honey are beyond this wilderness' cried the heaven-intoxicated John Bunyan, and the preacher has a mystic secret whereby through the wilderness men may come to the milk and honey. Verily 'the salvation of the soul is precious,' and great will be the preachers' crowd when this constraint works its inspiring miracles upon the hearts of the preachers.

The Glorifying of Christ is another potent constraint. With such a Christ to preach, how can a preacher refrain his lips? A Christ we have to publish who can meet the universal and variegated needs of man. He has balm for every wound, cordial for every fear; salvation for all sin. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge. He died to redeem the world. He lives to redeem the world. He will soon return to redeem the world. With what a price He redeemed us! Shall He not be glorified? Shall any labour be spared or any sacrifice withheld that the many crowns upon His head may be made more illustrious? It girds a preacher's weakness with strength to have such an end in view. It bathes him in a vision splendid. A preacher, if he be worthy the name, will let no minor object intrude; he will let no personal partialities keep him from endeavouring to make *all* men see the glory of his glorious Lord. Once let all who minister realize what a Christ they have to bestow upon men, and a floodtide of Popular Preaching will whelm the astonished world.

The secularity of the age is also a great constraint to Popular Preaching. More and more worldly grows the world. Esau, the 'profane person,' is the most common figure of every neighbourhood. In well nigh every home is one to be found. Materialism as a philosophy may have declined, but materialism as a practice has lamentably increased. Men and women are lapsing into heathenism all over this supposedly Christian land. They are thinking far more of their bodies than of their souls, far more of man than of God, far more of time than of eternity. What a call

to the preacher is this deplorable state of things! The secularity of the populace can be by nothing so effectually dissipated as by Popular Preaching. The word of the Lord must sound out if 'coming suddenly the Lord is not to find the nation sleeping.' Truly, it is no time for pulpit lightness, or for pulpit men-pleasing, or for pulpit self-advertisement. It is 'time for the Lord to work,' and He works by nothing so powerfully as He does by the Popular Preaching of the Gospel.

The rank and unblushing sins of our time constitute yet another constraint to Popular Preaching. All who discern the signs of the times can see that iniquity abounds, and the love of the many waxes cold. With 'an impudent face' men and women sin. Even the long-respected social conventions are ignored or defied. Many are not careful to wrap up sin. Women write novels which our law courts pronounce to be obscene. Judges declare that they are 'astounded' at the unblushingness of women who appear in the Divorce Courts. Vileness holds its head high. The land reeks with uncleanness. It is no time for the preacher to be silent. He must be as a tower of brass. He must cast aside all his preferences and go forth, as John Wesley did, to show the people all the mercy, by showing them all the sin. We have a salvation which can 'reprove' all 'the unfruitful works of darkness' and can transmute them into

'light in the Lord.' Then Popular Preaching must be called into exercise everywhere, for it was never more needed than in our day and generation.

In closing this chapter, it may be well to mention what I may describe as certain collateral benefits of Popular Preaching which cumulatively become a constraint to this so-necessary work. Popular Preaching, if it be worthy, makes a real contribution to the education of the people. It affords them august and uplifting themes of thought. It develops their minds. The Popular Preacher is a teacher. It is one of the 'neglected factors' in the history of the people's pulpit that it has wrought a widespread educational work. The villages of the land have owed more, educationally, to the Popular Preacher, than has yet been realized or acknowledged. The village chapel has often been a school for adults, as surely as the school of the village has been a school for children. And this has been equally true in the slums and poor districts of our cities and towns. If this be a minor constraint, it is yet unquestionably a constraint to Popular Preaching. And despite compulsory education, the educative Popular Pulpit is still needed. If the preacher can cause the people to love the Lord 'with all their understanding,' he is doing a noble work for God and for the empire.

How frequently Popular Preaching has refined the taste of the people, and evoked a love of good literature ! Is this an unworthy service to render ? And does the march of modern intelligence render this phase of Popular Preaching unnecessary ? I believe not. Whilst the soul's salvation is always the greatest and most urgent object of the Popular Preacher, yet his endeavour to effect intellectual and social amelioration must always be of high value to the community. May all these constraints attract the attention of the Churches, and especially of the preachers, for all that can contribute to securing Popular Preaching is to be counted precious. Whatever the Church fails to provide it must never be wanting in a Christ-honouring, soul-saving, mind-elevating Popular Pulpit. Such a pulpit will never be unappreciated and never unrewarded. The approval of God will irradiate it, and men will rally round it in loyal responsiveness. All who pant for the salvation of the common people must sustain the ordinance of Popular Preaching. The Church must encourage it and allow none to repress it.

The needs of the age cry out to us to keep our pulpits in the best sense, and not in a sordid sense, abreast of the times. Redeemed men are perishing for lack of evangelical knowledge. We must tell them ' the old, old story,' for it alone can plumb

the depths of their necessity. Let the pulpit gleam with the glory of Christ and no eclipse will ever darken it. If the pulpit be true to Christ, God will see that men are true to the pulpit.

Chapter IX

JOHN WESLEY AS A POPULAR PREACHER

It is, perhaps, impossible to over-estimate the significance of the fact that Methodism sprang out of Popular Preaching. Yet it is a fact which has been greatly under-estimated. Methodism's great progenitor was, beyond dispute, one of the noblest popular preachers of ecclesiastical history. Such a circumstance is of supreme importance in studying Methodism's heredity. We, of all people, should maintain our hereditary feature.

It has been common to describe John Wesley as being a consummate organizer and as having founded Methodism by organization. That he was a genius in organization must be gratefully admitted. Macaulay described him as one ' whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu,' and he surely merits the high eulogy. Methodism is, by common consent, a triumph of organization. But our contention is that, historically considered, Methodism is still more distinctly a triumph of Popular Preaching. It was John Wesley's Popular Preaching, rather

than his organizing genius, which, speaking after the manner of men, founded Methodism. He would have had little to organize had he not gathered the multitudes by his Popular Preaching and by it turned them to the Saviour. He organized what he had first achieved by his preaching.

John Wesley as a Popular Preacher to this day awaits adequate appreciation. His lesser characteristics have been allowed to eclipse his chief potency. He has never had a tithe of the credit he merits in this regard. Too often it has been affirmed that George Whitefield was the preacher and John Wesley the organizer of Methodism. I affirm that such a contrast ought never to have been created; such an antithesis should never have been instituted. It is historically false. Who would seek to depreciate George Whitefield as a Popular Preacher? His fame is established for ever. But his fame must not be maintained by the depreciation of John Wesley as a Popular Preacher. It is not congenial to those who love them both to compare them, but the necessity to do so has been created by the depreciators of John Wesley. 'Ye have compelled me,' we may retort upon such when they protest against our comparison.

We owe a great obligation to Dr. Rigg for his powerful championship of John Wesley as a

Popular Preacher. In his vivid and informative work, *The Living Wesley*, he conclusively demonstrates the pre-eminence of Wesley in this domain. He declares John Wesley to have been ' the most awakening and spiritually penetrating, and powerful preacher of his age.' He shows that more remarkable phenomena—physical and spiritual—accompanied the preaching of John Wesley than that of George Whitefield. Some have declared that George Whitefield was an orator and John Wesley was not, but this is historically invalid. *Both* were supreme evangelical orators. Whitefield was more histrionic, but Wesley was more epigrammatic. Whitefield was more ardent, but Wesley was more incisive. Thank God for the lustre of both these glorious twin stars !

It is simply futile to say that Wesley was not a Popular Preacher. Let history, easily accessible, be appealed to, and the issue will be clear. What crowds attended him everywhere ! When he landed in any place it might have been said to him as James said to Paul, ' the multitude must needs come together ; for they will hear that thou art come.' What lengthy discourses he delivered ! He could hold multitudes enchained for an hour, two hours, three hours ! Instances abound in his biographies. Nothing is more assured concerning John Wesley than that he was, as a Popular Preacher, ' King in Jerusalem,' though, perhaps,

no feature of the wonderful man has been more persistently overlooked. It is worth while inquiring as to the reason why Wesley the Popular Preacher has been so inadequately realized. And, I believe, the chief explanation is not at all remote. His published discourses afford the secret. Those published discourses themselves have been sadly under-estimated. Their nervous English style; their Butler-like precision of statement; their extraordinary theological and evangelical insight, are beyond praise. And many have expressed wonder that such discourses should have awakened such all-but-unparalleled popular response. The ready and plain answer to such wonder is that it was not by *those* discourses that Wesley built up his Popular Pulpit. Dr. Rigg, I think, makes this abundantly clear in the noble book on Wesley to which I have already referred. He asserts that John Wesley's *printed* sermons were altogether different from his *preached* sermons. How so? Because the printed sermons were specially prepared as doctrinal standards for his preachers and people. Face to face with the multitude John Wesley preached in a very different style from that which is disclosed in his printed discourses.

I never realized this as I did when I read Sir Walter Scott's description of Wesley's preaching. In Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, that classical biography, Sir Walter Scott tells of hearing John Wesley

preach when the renowned preacher was a venerable man, and himself a youth, but a youth with the Scottish appreciation of preaching. Confessedly, Sir Walter Scott did not greatly enjoy Wesley's sermon. But the reason he assigns for his lack of pleasure is what is of great significance to our present argument. He says that Wesley was too ' colloquial,' and that he told too may anecdotes ! It requires great imaginative effort for such as know Wesley's printed sermons to realize him as ' colloquial ' and as adventuring into the sphere of anecdote. Yet so undoubtedly Sir Walter Scott veraciously portrays him. Some of us require no further witness that we have not in our hands to-day the sermons which John Wesley delivered to eager multitudes all over the land.

That John Wesley was a regally great Popular Preacher can never be successfully disputed. Nor can it be successfully denied that it was by his Popular Preaching that ' by grace ' he founded the Methodist community. Our intense conviction is that what, humanly, created Methodism, is the chief factor of its sustentation. It is conceivable that other religious communions might subsist without Popular Preaching—though it is only conceivable, not probable, and I would add not possible ! But *Methodism* cannot live and thrive without it. The founding of our denomination

and its history seem to me abundantly to authenticate this.

Seeing, then, that this is so, it is profitable to inquire what were some of the qualities of the Popular Preaching of John Wesley. Let us see if they are capable of reproduction, and if their reproduction be desirable. This is surely a matter of all-but-infinite importance. I will therefore seek to indicate certain of the characteristics of John Wesley as a Popular Preacher, fervently trusting that the history may repeat itself as the years glide by. It is but a sketch which can be now attempted, but it may happily lead some to seek out a completely finished picture. Considerable stress should be laid upon the undoubted fact that this wonderful Popular Preacher was a man of eminent intellect. Many of the greatest evangelists have been intellectualists of a high order, from the days of St. Paul to to-day, which is a fact of immense suggestiveness and fraught with immense encouragement to all who love the faith of Christ. John Wesley swayed the common people as few preachers have swayed them. It is a notable fact that he succeeded with the multitudes of the poor as George Whitefield did not. Yet what delicate and beautiful scholarship was John Wesley's. In what latitude of the intellect was he deficient? It would be difficult to indicate any. He was one of the first

classical scholars of his century. He was a logician of superb equipment. Was he not a great theologian ? I maintain that he was a great speculative theologian, and he was one of the chief masters of experimental theology. Was he not a philosopher ? Would it be too much to claim that he was a philosophical theologian ? Was he not an historical critic ? Is it affirming what is beyond the mark to declare him a literary critic ? He was assuredly a poet and a competent critic of the poets. Will any deny that he was a great stylist in English literature ? I will add this yet again, that he was a notable orator. Nor will I shrink from yet again adding that he was a distinguished expositor.

And he brought all these rare and radiant intellectual gifts to the work and service of Popular Preaching. We can scarcely make too much of what is implied in this. It points many a practical moral and many a cheering moral. It is an invaluable illustration of what has been contended for in this lecture—that the noblest intellectual endowment is not wasted upon the Popular Preacher, nor is it wasted upon the common people. And this same is abundantly reinforced in the history of the Popular Pulpit of all the Churches, and not least of our own Church. To look only at some instances in the later years, years which some of us remember so well, of

recent Popular Preachers of the Church of England, Canon Hay Aitken was for many years in the foremost rank. He was, in some respects, a typical Popular Preacher, and he was a scholar of no mean excellence, a man of refined literary taste. Canon Knox Little was a man of marked literary affinities, delicate in taste, and with the instincts of a poet. If I cite only the names of Dean Farrar, Archbishop Magee, Prebendary Webb Peploe, it will be enough to recall to many of us a shining company of Anglican Popular Preachers who, in this respect, followed in John Wesley's wake. The illustrations from the Free Churches are all but numberless. Not to repeat names previously mentioned in this Lecture, it may suffice to indicate Dr. Watkinson, Paxton Hood, Herber Evans, Dr. Fairbairn. In fact, the illustrations which could be brought forward are so numerous that it might be exclaimed 'And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell.'

It is needful to press home this consideration, because of the still-lingering delusion that Popular Preaching and rich intellectual gifts are mutually exclusive. The whole history of the pulpit negatives such a misconception. And as long as John Wesley's great example is before them, surely the people called Methodists cannot entertain such a delusion. We want our choicest scholars

and our repletest students and our best bookmen for the Popular Pulpit. They could not put their powers to a nobler use, and they could not find a more appreciative constituency than that of the common people. What grander sphere is there for a preacher of great intellectual dower than that of him who brings good tidings to Zion, and cries unto her that her Saviour reigneth? 'Lord evangelize the rising talent of our Church,' cried Thomas Chalmers. Let the Churches utter their grand Amen to that fervent and always-timely supplication!

It is worthy of careful attention, too, that John Wesley, the Popular Preacher, was a man of the most delicate refinement. There was no strain of coarseness in his constitution; if I may so say, his was a classical constitution. A man may be a scholar, and yet be of coarse fibre. This can never be an impeachment of John Wesley. Unhappily there have been Popular Preachers who have had a marked vein of coarseness, but this is no argument against Popular Preaching, for there have been unpopular preachers who have been coarse, and of some non-popular preachers the same may be affirmed. John Wesley is well worth fastening our eyes upon in this particular as in so many admirable particulars. He was a truly refined gentleman who, scorning snobbery, pined to preach the Gospel to the multitudes. We

can well understand his saying as his life-day drew towards evening, that all through his career he had had abundantly more temptation to be a philosophical sluggard than to be an itinerant preacher ; but he sacrificially squashed his predilections and spent himself in preaching to the common people.

It is a commonplace of the history of Popular Preaching that the refined gentleman has oft-times been the Popular Preacher. And it is vital that this type be perpetuated, and perpetuated among the people called Methodists. You often discover to-day real refinement and delicate taste among the poor and among the least educated. Many a true gentleman is clad in homespun. And as civilization increases this is likely to be witnessed in increasing degree. Thus the Popular Preacher of the John Wesley type of refinement will be greatly demanded, and will have a great area for his ministrations.

No young preacher, ministerial or lay, should ever contemn the office and work of a Popular Preacher. The scions of our so-called 'best families' can engage upon no nobler work. It is a splendid thing for young men who have been born with a silver spoon in their mouth voluntarily to remove the silver spoon and go forth to preach the gospel to such as never knew the dubious experience of having a silver spoon in their mouth.

Never let any young preacher cherish contempt for the people's pulpit. Their best gifts will be appreciated by the poorest, if their evident purpose is the salvation of their hearers. And let not parents and friends seek to dissuade our cultured and converted youth from preaching and from Popular Preaching. Of John Wesley we may say :

> Let his grand example stand
> Colossal, seen of every land.

He gave his whole cultured personality to the work of Popular Preaching. No intellectual or social pride clouded that splendid soul. Freely he had received and freely he gave. ' Who follows in his train ? ' We need to-day a great army of such Popular Preachers. The growing laxity of conduct and the growing indifference makes the need burningly imperative. We need the wise and noble, if our debt to deliver the gospel to all is to be discharged. As with a silver trumpet, the example of John Wesley calls our youthhood to this soul-redeeming work. May it not call in vain !

Methodist preachers are the children of a man who was described by Macaulay as ' A man whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have made him eminent in literature,' yet discarded every preference and prejudice and devoted himself to treading the difficult path of a Popular Preacher. This is at once a shining example and a stern

admonition to the company of the preachers. John Wesley the Popular Preacher was John Wesley the Expository Preacher. And in this he is a glorious illustration of what is urged throughout this Lecture that the ideal Popular Preaching is biblical. Nor is it only the ideal Popular Preaching, but it has been realized in the history of the greatest Popular Preachers. Nothing awakens such popular interest as does the exposition of God's wonderful book. The Popular Preacher of the past may not have been an exegete, but he has almost invariably been an expositor. His exposition has been like the book he has expounded, 'quick and powerful.' He has shown the central and vital and personal and immediate meaning of the Word of God. Assuredly, this was true of John Wesley. His sermons were expositions and applications of Scripture. And from youth to old age his sermons were welcomed and drunk in by the common people, and turned to their salvation. In the pulpit, as out of it, John Wesley was a man of one book. Such have been the worthiest of the Popular Preachers. The Bible is the People's Bible. The instinct of the people responds to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit causes that instinct to bring forth fruit to the glory of God. If the preacher will follow John Wesley in this he will not fail in his degree to be a Popular Preacher. God and man will conspire to make him such, and

the more so because he himself will less and less strive to be such. Preacher! Hide yourself in your Bible! Covet to tell its treasures of salvation. Never fear that a biblical ministry will not be attractive! The man who cries with intellectual and spiritual passion, 'Thus saith the Lord,' will never lack a congregation. The preacher who glows about the Bible will make the people glow about it—the Holy Spirit will work that work.

The Churches will do well to encourage their preachers to expound the Scriptures. They will render enormous and inclusive service to the pulpit by so doing, and not least they will invest it with a glorious and enduring popularity. The Churches do so much to make or mar the pulpit. Be it frankly said that if the pulpit's power declines, the Churches have, in large degree, to blame themselves for it. Let the Methodist people keep John Wesley's shining example in their grateful view. Let them be determined that the type shall be conformed to. Let them realize that the declension of the pulpit means the ultimate declension of the Churches; that no minor expedient can long preserve them if their Popular Preaching fails.

John Wesley's preaching was the Popular Preaching it was, because it was so distinctly and ardently experimental. He always aimed at

saving and sanctifying those who heard him. And the Holy Spirit saw to it that he did not labour in vain. He built up lives. He irradiated them. He eternized them. He made them Christlike. He made them heavenly. The history of the pulpit has rarely disclosed such a master of practical or experimental theology as John Wesley. He, the Holy Spirit working with him, wrought the Truth of God into the life of man. He moulded character and saved the empire in so doing. Incalculable political and social benefits followed upon his experimental preaching, as they will always follow such preaching. The Church best serves political and social interests by minding its own proper business, which business is, as John Wesley succinctly put it, 'to save souls.' No one ever took a broader and truer view of what it is to save souls than did John Wesley. To save a soul is to save the whole man, and to do this is to build up an empire and to sweeten society, and to change the face of the whole earth with a transfiguring change.

It cannot be repeated too often and urged too insistently that spiritual and experimental preaching, like John Wesley's, is the truly Popular Preaching, and the only Popular Preaching which the Christian pulpit should ever contemplate. The spiritual is ultimately and inevitably popular. Let the Churches credit this and act according to

this, and they will find favour as with God so with man. John Wesley's fervent and unceasing Love of Souls, makes his Popular Preaching all but ideal. The fervent heat of the evangelist glowed within him, even when old age was withering his physical frame. His passion for men's salvation conquered the weakness of his body and made him preach the Glad Tidings up to within a fortnight of his death, his triumphant death. Few spectacles of Church history are so thrilling as that of John Wesley burning to save souls amid the feebleness of old age. The war-horse stirred within him to the end.

It is richly instructive to witness John Wesley's separation from the world—few men have had a separation so utter—and yet his tender and quenchless sympathy with men. That blending of separateness and sympathy has rarely, if ever, been matched. He loved men with an intensity seldom equalled among the evangelists of history. And it was their never-dying souls which he loved most in them. Herein he was wise with a God-taught wisdom. A man's soul is the main thing about him. The soul *is* the man. He who ministers to man and neglects man's souls is an ill-instructed benefactor. How vividly John Wesley perceived this! And how tirelessly he wrought to save the souls of men. He saw that Popular Preaching was his most effective method of winning souls; he deemed it to be God's

supreme method of winning souls ; and, therefore, he pressed along his arduous way, uttering the proclamation of the evangelical herald till his breath was spent.

Along that same consecrated and historic path let all his successors follow according to the ability which God giveth. And along that same path let all preachers of all Churches and of all orders, be resolved to pass. It is the vision of the high worth of the souls of men and the fervent desire for their salvation which is the golden secret of Popular Preaching. When this talisman fails, Popular Preaching dies down. Whilst this sacred spell endures Popular Preaching will never cease.

To see the Great White Throne, and the assured standing before it of great and small ; to realize that all are Redeemed by ' the precious blood of Christ ' ; to be possessed with the delightful conviction that all may be saved ; *this* is the inspiration of Popular Preaching. John Wesley's preaching career demonstrates this, and a great cloud of witnesses makes the demonstration yet more sure. Never will the Church and the world lack Popular Preaching as long as John Wesley's pattern is admired and emulated. Let the Methodist Pulpit be conformed to its original type and its well-grounded popularity will never decline. In proportion as preachers neglect John Wesley's example they will fail of all popularity

worthy of the name. But if they prayerfully and assiduously do according to his pattern the common people will always hear them gladly.

Where John Wesley found the secret of Popular Preaching all preachers will discover it. It is the realization of the eternal worth of the human soul which creates and sustains all preaching which is truly popular. And it is at the Cross of Christ that this transcendent worth is discovered. That the soul of man cost ' the blood of God ' to redeem it, is the incontrovertible evidence of the preciousness of the soul. If preachers live at Calvary, I do not shrink from saying, they possess the secret of Popular Preaching. Nowhere else is that inestimable secret to be learned.

This is the fundamental lesson to be learned from a study of John Wesley as a Popular Preacher. When this lesson is burned into the souls of preachers, there will ensue such Popular Preaching as there was in John Wesley's wonderful day.

Chapter X

PERILS OF POPULAR PREACHING

The safeguarding of such a sacred function as Popular Preaching makes it incumbent that we should, even at the risk of iteration, utter warning as to the perils which waylay it. All worthy achievements are difficult, alike in the sacred and in the secular world. We have to scale 'toppling crags' if we are to reach 'shining tablelands.' We are 'scarcely saved' from all perils. And this is conspicuously true of Popular Preaching. It shall be our earnest endeavour in this chapter to disclose some of the perils of Popular Preaching. But be it always remembered that the aggregated perils constitute no reason for disclaiming the institution, rather they are a reason for resolving that we will utilize the institution to the uttermost.

Obviously, and yet not so obviously as to make it superfluous to urge it, a primary peril of Popular Preaching is that the preacher should seek it as an end in itself. When once a preacher makes it his final aim to be popular, he fails of the chief end of his preaching, and, moreover, he ensures the ultimate decay of his popularity. 'Do I seek to

please men ? ' the preacher must inquire, using the question in the sense in which St. Paul used it, and if his conscience tells him that he does, then he must conclude that he is not ' the servant of Christ.' Egoism in the pulpit is insufferable ; every true preacher bitterly repents of the seasons when it has suffused his soul. When the preacher's name is ' Mr. By-ends ' he should never mount the pulpit again. And that it is easy to merit such a name is unhappily evident to all. Marcus Dods loved to quote the saying that we should have no public but the eye of God. It is a significant saying, and worthy of the acceptation of all preachers. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of this solemn matter. How horrible, in the sight of God and of Eternity, for a preacher to seek popularity as an end. Surely if the viper should ever cleave to us we will cast it into the fire.

It is an undoubted peril of Popular Preaching that it should neglect Evangelism. We are so liable to be satisfied with the secondary, especially when the secondary is excellent. The better the good the more is it an enemy of the best. The Popular Pulpit must seek the conversion of the people. This is its bounden duty. Nothing will condone the neglect of this. The willingness to stop short of this is an ever-besetting peril of the preacher. And if the people, as they too often

do, acquiesce in this shortcoming, they are involved with the preacher in condemnation. 'To save some' is what we must burningly feel to be the earliest and latest motive of Popular Preaching.

An easily recognized peril of Popular Preaching is the failure to instruct the people in the Doctrines of God. A creedless pulpit creates a creedless Church, and a creedless Church must be spiritually impotent. At all costs this peril must be averted. Popularity purchased by the elimination of teaching is a popularity to be persistently eschewed. And we strongly believe that religiously instructive preaching will not fail of popularity. There is intrinsic attractiveness in evangelical truth, and he who seeks to present that truth attractively, as in the sight of God and Christ, will be a Popular Preacher. We are persuaded that this is the conclusion of history and of experience.

That Popular Preaching fails to sanctify character is another of the perils which assail it. This philistine danger is always looming upon the scene. There has been a Popular Preaching, 'falsely so called,' which has been apparently content to please the hearer without making him holy. Did this prevail the pulpit would be a curse and not a blessing. Popular Preaching must vindicate itself by beautifying the souls of them that hear; indeed, this is its only vindication.

When Popular Preaching adorns men with the beautiful garments of holiness, its most inveterate critics can say nothing against it. ' The man that was healed ' stops their energetic mouth.

A peril of Popular Preaching is that it should not afford help to the daily life of its hearers. This danger must be averted by the preacher. There is nothing so God-like as to help others. God delights to call Himself the ' Help ' of His people. And the Incarnate God lived to help mankind. When the Spirit of God possesses a preacher it becomes his gladsome passion to help his congregation. Sermons that *help* are the only sermons worth preaching. The pulpit that *helps* is always a Popular Pulpit. Woe to the pulpit if it fail to help ! This peril must be averted by all means. The preacher who amuses, who excites curiosity, who leaves a dominant impression of his own cleverness, who engages the thoughts of the people upon trivial themes, is traitorous to God and to the people. Not only must the preacher flee from such a peril, but the people must co-operate with him that he may conquer the peril. Let them come to the service with this one end in view—to receive help. Let them use entreaty with the preacher that he help them. Let them intercede with God that He enable the preacher to help them. Let them gladden the preacher by telling him when they have received help. Above

all, let them give glory to God for the help they have received. When popularity becomes a motive instead of helpfulness then the glory is departed from Popular Preaching, but when the regnant desire is to afford help to the people, then Popular Preaching is glorious with the glory that excelleth.

An ever-present peril of Popular Preaching is that the church becomes a mere place of entertainment. What a prostitution ! What a blasphemy ! It is so easy for a preacher to surrender himself to the pulpit-travesty of making the people enjoy themselves. And it is equally easy for the people to lay themselves out for this. When preacher and people combine to have ' a good time,' ' a happy time,' ' a jolly time,' they are ' found wanting ' before God. The old preachers often gave the people a terrible time. They felt as if they were sitting on thorns. They came nigh to ' the everlasting burnings.' They waxed indignant against the faithful messenger of the Lord. Sometimes they flamed with wrath. They declared they would never hear that man again, for he made them so uncomfortable and so wretched. But they *did* hear him again. The Spirit of God suffered them not to stay away. They came and they were conquered by saving Grace. And, strangely as it seems to some, such preaching was tremendously popular. The preacher saw to his

faithfulness and the recompensing God saw to the preacher's popularity. So it used to be and so it ever will be.

A further peril which stealthily shadows Popular Preaching is the neglect of building up the Church ; building it up numerically and building it up spiritually. I believe that Popular Preaching has far oftener been associated with Church-building than many have supposed. The history of Methodism in particular discloses this very distinctly. The great Popular Preachers of our Church in its early period, in its mid-period, and in its later period too, have to a surprisingly great extent built up the sacred commonwealth of the Church. They have often been charged with neglecting this or of failing to achieve this, but, I believe, an impartial survey of our denominational history would acquit them of such an indictment. It has been the rule rather than the exception that Popular Preaching has been a wonderful Church-building instrumentality. The true Popular Preaching inevitably works to this end. It makes Christians and it makes them churchmen. And I do not hesitate to say that, normally, all Christians should be churchmen.

Certainly *un*popular preaching has done little for the building up of the Churches. It has driven people away from the Churches and not allured them to the Churches. Nor has it done much for

the spiritual edification of the Churches. Popular Preaching must be levelled to the aim of adding people to the Church, and establishing the Church in the Faith of God's elect. We need a great revival of churchmanship of the New Testament order. It is scarcely possible to make too much of the Church so understood. And Popular Preaching which is not a Church-building force fails of one of its supremest duties. That this peril exists there can be no doubt, and it exists that it may be perpetually overcome.

Another peril which befalls Popular Preaching is the peril of softening the message of the Gospel to soothe the throng. It is always an acute and imminent peril. 'Prophesy unto us smooth things,' has always been a demand of sections of the populace, and there have always been prophets who have complied with the demand. We rejoice to believe that such pulpit-apostasies have been exceptional. 'Deceits' have not been the staple of Popular Preaching. There is an 'unaccredited heroism' in this matter. Consider how nobly the great Popular Preachers of history have surmounted this peril. They have triumphed gloriously over it. Did not Augustine? Did not Chrysostom? Did not Luther? Did not John Bunyan? Did not Wesley and Whitefield? Did not Charles Haddon Spurgeon? The fidelity of Popular Preachers has generally been as notable as

their popularity. They have dared with Daniel-like courageousness. They have faithfully shown Jerusalem its sins and iniquities. They have not sold the truth to serve the hour. Worthy of that splendid succession let all Popular Preachers be!

It appears to me that the peril of Popular Preaching to-day lies largely in what I have described as softening the message of the Gospel. Particularly is there danger of turning down the revelation of 'the wrath to come.' This revelation is fiercely resented by many; by many it is scorned. But it stands in all its awfulness as part of the Word of God. And it is at the preacher's fearful peril that he suppresses it or minimizes it. Hell is as great a reality as Heaven, and no eschatology which lessens the terror of Hell has its sanction in the Word of God. Pulpit Popularity gained by unfaithfulness to our message is to be deplored and shunned.

Kindred to this peril is that of lowering the authority of Holy Scripture. It is all too congenial to fallen man to lower the sanctions of 'the law of the Lord.' It may make the preacher popular in some quarters, but what is such ill-gotten popularity worth? What is it in God's most holy sight? What is it in the eyes of such as are keeping the Faith? What will it appear to be in the awful light of the Great White Throne? Depend upon

it, the pulpit can never win souls with an imperfectly inspired Bible. To fight our fight with such an instrument is to fight with a wooden sword instead of with 'the sword of the Spirit.' The preacher who is, amid good report and evil report, loyal to the Bible as the Word of God, may lose a meretricious popularity, but he will gain a solid and enduring popularity.

Thickly sown are the perils of Popular Preaching, and one of the most common perils is that of seeking to conciliate the world. But what a cheap and fading popularity is thus secured. Such miserable popularity is easily won and just as easily lost. There is a Popular Preaching which, during its brief and evil day, has flourished by apologizing for the Bible, and its sternness to sin, and its unequivocal utterances concerning the doom of sin. It has derided the Bible's severe standards of holy living. It has expended its flimsy wit upon making fun of the old-fashioned saints. It has been sarcastic with a feeble sarcasm about the 'Puritanism' of faithful Christians. It has pleaded for what the prophets of the past pleaded against. It has revelled in a supposed up-to-dateness. But Popular Preaching must always reject such pulpit-expedients if it is to be worthy of Christ and worthy of its own best history. 'The friend of the world' is evermore 'the enemy of God.' And none can relax the

stern decree. Conformity to the world has always been ruinous to the Church, and preaching which tends to foster such conformity, still more surely tends to accomplish such ruin.

When Popular Preaching refuses to yield to the peril of conciliating the world it is approved of God, and it is approved of God's people. And let it be again and again observed, that it ultimately retains and augments its popularity. Popular Preaching may lower the pulpit in the estimation of both the Church and the world. And this is a peril which besets it. It is a serious thing to degrade the pulpit in the eyes of men. We should be very jealous for the pulpit as the ordinance of God. Its sacred pre-eminence should be steadfastly maintained.

Brothers, it is a stirring consideration that we have the reputation of the Christian pulpit in our keeping. Let us guard it well. The Lord Christ founded it, and equipped it for His own glory in the salvation of man. It is a tower of deliverance. It is the shrine of good news to mankind. It is builded to fulfil the Good Pleasure of God. He who degrades it dishonours God and robs man. It is as glorifying to God as it is beneficent to man. We have its sacred dignity and power in our keeping. Make it a thing for amusement, make it the instrument for entertainment, make it a faculty for self-enrichment, and we defile it. To

the assembly of such as effect such a debasement be none of our souls united !

Be it always remembered that contiguous upon this peril lies another peril. If we lower the prestige, the spiritual prestige, of the pulpit we lower that of the Church. In early Christianity the Church and the pulpit were inseparably associated. They stood or fell together. In a very real sense the pulpit had the destiny of the Church at its command. The Protestant Reformation restored, or made manifest, that essential association. It may be truly said that the Methodist Revival accentuated that relationship. The Protestant and Evangelical Church has always asserted and maintained that tremendous relationship. I believe it to be necessary to articulate that relationship in our day. In a very true and solemn sense the pulpit has the Church in its keeping. So that to lower the one is of necessity to lower the other. This being so, a great trust is committed to the preacher, and specially great is the dispensation committed to the Popular Preacher. Popular Preaching must be held largely responsible for the estimation in which the Church is held by the people. Surely this is enough to make us realize how grave is the peril of such preaching being perverted. Surely preachers and people will unite to guard the pulpit from such perversion.

A further solemn word must be spoken. The

peril attends Popular Preaching, not only of lowering the pulpit and the Church in the eyes of the world, but of depreciating the Saviour Himself. 'Before all the people I will be glorified,' is His irrevocable word. And as in Levitical days He sorely punished those who failed to do this; so it is now. The popular pulpit is charged with the momentous duty of exalting the Crucified and Risen and Glorified Lord. If it fail to do so, who shall describe the tragedy of that failure? Let but preachers and people realize how great a commission has the popular pulpit, and they will strive mightily to override its perils, and they will, by the Grace of God, strive successfully. Anything which tends even obliquely and by inference, to dim the glory of the Lord, must be regarded as a terrible peril to Popular Preaching. Christ must be exalted at all costs. No minor motives must be allowed; they must be fought against, they must be destroyed by power from on high, in answer to never-ceasing prayer. It is enough to fill the consecrated ambition of a preacher that he may, by his preaching, make the glory of Christ to appear to the people. Popular Preaching has this shining possibility ever before it. Who would not make it his ceaseless prayer and his passionate endeavour whilst health remains to him, to attain to that possibility which, happily, is as achievable as it is glorious?

Ere we leave this solemn branch of our subject, let me remind you of another peril which environs Popular Preaching. It is that we should be unable to give a good account of it at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Very soon, at the longest, preachers and people must account for their stewardship to the Lord. Will each steward be found faithful when he stands at that bar? The inquiry may well fill us with 'the fear of the Lord,' even as it did St. Paul.

Soon all veils will be rended, and all hearts accurately discerned. Soon our ill-motives and ill-spiritedness will be judged. Soon it will appear who were shepherds and who were hirelings. And we shall, all of us, need to find mercy of the Lord in that day. Brethren, the peril of not being able to give a worthy account then, is enough to make us give ourselves to our Popular Preaching with a purity of motive, and selfless consecration, and high effectiveness such as we have never known before.

The perils that beset Popular Preaching are incidental to its importance. It is so tempted because it is capable of such great things. Let no preacher lose heart or hope. The God of all grace, who established the pulpit, is on our side. He waits to invest our trembling weakness with His illimitable strength. Around our incompleteness flows the Divine completeness. God is able to make all grace abound to us.' Nay! The very

perilousness of our task is a pledge of Heavenly Help. The Lord of the pulpits will make the pulpits wells of salvation to the thirsty souls that gather around them. Why have we, as some may deem it, with mournful reiteration, dwelt upon some of the perils of Popular Preaching? That it may be cast aside? That it may have less attention paid to its cultivation? In nowise. For the opposite reason: that it may be estimated more highly and attended to more scrupulously. Our increasing conviction is that Popular Preaching is essentially necessary for a hundred reasons, and sacred reasons. We long to have the instrument attuned to the noblest pitch. We would rouse the Churches to spare no endeavour to promote its best utility.

That Popular Preaching has often brought discredit upon itself and upon the Church cannot be denied. But the Church that on this account rejects or depreciates the agency is ill-advised indeed. And the Church that fails to honour its Popular Preachers is bringing a sure Nemesis upon itself. Let us seek to give the world such Popular Preaching as will turn to the world's salvation. Alive to its perils, let us be yet more alive to its glorious evangelical possibilities. Rather than reproaching it with its failures, let us encourage it by recalling to it the noblest chapters of its past.

It is well also to remember that perils attend upon *all* preaching. Popular Preaching has no monopoly of perils. *Un*popular preaching is sphered amid perils. No type of pulpit can afford to discount its peculiar perils. We do well to commit the great agency of Popular Preaching to the keeping of the Lord. We believe Him to be jealous for its honour, and zealous to preserve it inviolate. He created it and He will sustain it. He knows its perils better than the most spiritually-minded of us know them. Prayerfully and vigilantly, and with industry invincible, let us, as preachers, give ourselves to this glorious work, assured that Divine Power will work in us mightily.

No fears need cause us to cease from this work of Popular Preaching. We are strong in the Lord. He in whom we trust will strengthen us. He will maintain His own appointed ordinance, and when we look back upon our ministration from the glory-land, the very perilousness of our service will make the Grace which enables us to fulfil it appear the more glorious.

Chapter XI

THE HISTORY OF POPULAR PREACHING

We do not propose to attempt even a complete sketch of the history of Popular Preaching. We rather desire to cast glances upon the wonderful record and to endeavour to educe some lessons which emanate from it. As has been remarked earlier in this Lecture, the course of Popular Preaching has been indeed glorious. It is as shining as it is prolonged. It is scarcely possible to depict it in colours of overwrought brightness.

We have already reverently affirmed that the history of Popular Preaching was begun upon the earth by the great God Himself. It is a marvellous fact, which abounds in marvellous implications. How it illustrates the exceeding Grace of God to man! That God should descend from His illustrious throne and build the first pulpit upon the sin-stained earth is indeed a miracle of Grace. It reveals the love of God in the loveliest light. The Deity was the primal evangelist! Who can realize the romance of that amazing fact? How it discloses the heart of God towards sinners! How it anticipates the Incarnation of God the Son

that He might preach peace to a rebellious world !

And what a strong encouragement it is to the servants of God to proclaim the Glad Tidings ! If I were asked what is the greatest incentive to Popular Preaching, my immediate and gladsome answer would be : the example of the God of all Grace. The Protevangelium should inspire the world-wide and increasing proclamation of the Evangel. In Eden, the history of Popular Preaching began, and to Eden we must ever believingly return for our stimulation to this sublimest of all services to mankind. Brother preacher, when thine heart fails thee, revert in holy imagination to the glades of Eden, and listen, awestruck, and ardent with ' Redemption-gratitude ' to the God of all as He declares the eternal gospel to the guilty progenitors of man !

The wonderful Book of Genesis is rich in its contributions to the earliest history of Popular Preaching. The sin-curse had hardly settled upon this ' blighted star ' when we read this : ' Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord ' (Genesis iv. 26). In the judgement of some excellent Hebrew scholars that word ' upon,' in our English Version, is misleading. They suggest that we should read the original word more accurately if we read it, ' Then began men to call (or proclaim) the Name of the Lord.' Reading it

thus, what it suggests! It is the earliest narrative of Popular Preaching. Those Popular Preachers are anonymous. They are only remembered by what they did. Some of the noblest people of the Bible are pathetically anonymous. But, evidently the work of those Popular Preachers in the grey dawn of history was widespread. Here, there, and everywhere, 'the Name of the Lord' was called. The earth was evangelized earlier far than we have often realized.

And this history has always repeated itself. It is repeating itself to-day. The names of hosts of faithful Popular Preachers are forgotten upon the earth, albeit they are all written in 'the Book of Life.' How little, then or now, is fame to be counted for! How small a thing it will be when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up! Thank God for the forgotten legions of 'men' who have proclaimed 'the Name of the Lord.' It is little if we go down to our grave and up to our heaven, sharing their anonymity.

Moreover, it is good to remember that evangelization has been far more general than we have surmised, and it is more widespread to-day than we can tell. Everywhere, on land and sea, men are calling 'the Name of the Lord.' Great is the company of the men and women who publish it. More sowers are going forth to sow the Word of God than we, in our depressed hours, are able to

visualize. Enoch was a striking and far-shining example of Popular Preaching. He ' walked with God,' and this is ever the primary condition of Popular Preaching. The preacher who lives this mystical life has the golden secret of Popular Preaching. He draws, moment by moment, his inspiration from the God whose own example of Popular Preaching is so thrilling. No man who walks with God can be silent about God and God's Great Salvation. Enoch lighted his lamp at the great Fontal-fire.

We are indebted to the flaming Jude for our conception of Enoch as a Popular Preacher. It is a happy illustration of how mutually supplemental the divers portions of Scripture are. Jude, himself a mighty preacher, gives us a striking delineation of how Enoch, the first mystic, preached. He was near the fount of things ; he was ' the seventh from Adam,' and he sets a grand example to every son of Adam who preaches to Adam's fallen race. How he denounced sin, alike in its ' ungodly deeds,' and its ' hard speeches ' ! How he convicted his contemporaries of their having done what they did ' against Him ' ! How he preached ' judgement upon all ' ! And not least, how, ages before the Lord's First Coming, Enoch declared the Lord's Second Coming ! ' Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints,' is Enoch's arresting proclamation. I do

not hesitate to say that Enoch is a pattern Popular Preacher to all time. In so far as we travel away from Enoch's preaching we travel in the wrong direction. It is the very preaching the world needs to-day. Sin. Conviction of sin. Judgement. The Lord's Second Coming. *These* are the themes which should absorb the Popular Preacher. O let this history, 'written for our learning,' deeply impress both preachers and people. O let this flaming history repeat itself. Pause we at this early epoch in the history of Popular Preaching, and let its lessons be embedded in our hearts. Put an Enoch in a pulpit to-day, and the power of him will be manifest, for it is the power of the God with whom he walks. Be the latter-day Enoch a minister or a layman, his tongue will be a tongue of fire. The man of culture, or the uneducated man, if he preach Enoch's preaching in Enoch's spirit, will be mighty through God. Yes, our age needs Popular Preachers like Enoch. And such preachers will, in the noblest sense, be popular. Their quality is attested in the conscience of their hearers. Deep in the heart of man their power abides.

Noah arrests our attention and excites our interest as we sweep along the courses of the earliest history of Popular Preaching. It is to St. Peter that we owe our knowledge of the momentous fact that Noah was 'a preacher of righteousness.' What a

weird and tragic, and yet splendid, figure is Noah ! He is an illustration of how unsuccessful a Popular Preacher may be ; a mysterious and paradoxical, yet undoubted, fact. Here again, the open-secret of Popular Preaching is disclosed : ' Noah walked with God.' Platitudinous though it may sound, we must ever insist upon this as the first great pre-requisite. It is not walking with man, but walking with God which is the essential of Popular Preaching. We would all walk more evangelizingly with man if we walked with God. Noah's great preaching-theme was ' Righteousness,' and here is the explanation, ' Noah was a righteous man.' It is the old and eternal law that personal character is the first essential of Popular Preaching. Only a righteous man can really preach ' righteousness.' And there is, I believe, a great historical inclusiveness in that word ' righteousness,' as applied to Noah's preaching. I believe that he preached ' righteousness ' in its evangelical signification, as well as in its ethical signification.

I believe that the Popular Preachers of the Genesis era were evangelical preachers. Some would smile at my credulity in so believing, but so I intensely believe, and I think also that I have the ' Spirit of God.' Let Popular Preaching, without fail, take Noah's austere but beautiful example into account. It is ' righteousness ' in all

its phases and aspects which needs to be preached to-day. Both the Church and the world need the doctrine of ' righteousness.' Such faithful preaching will be popular, witness the long history of Popular Preaching, but it may often (as in Noah's day) be spiritually unsuccessful. It may not satisfy the passion for ' results,' nor the itch for scheduled statistics, but its record will be treasured in heaven. In God's great day every Noah will have his ' praise of God.'

It almost dazes us to hurry along through the early books of the Bible and witness the bright succession of the Popular Preachers. Abraham was a stalwart and splendid prophet. So was Jacob. What shall we say of Joseph ? Shall we not characterize that genius of statesmanship as one of the great preachers of history ? He was a type of Christ in this as in so many things. As we pass down the ages, many a Popular Preacher attracts our eyes. Is it beyond the mark to class Ezra and Nehemiah among them ? They will not so determine who know their histories best. What pungency and scripturalness and sympathy and zeal marked their words ! How burning was their desire for the glory of God ! And what immediate success they had, despite all the opposition which came out against them !

David stands out as one of the most dramatic and glorious figures in the biblical gallery. He was

a prophet indeed. David was a Popular Preacher in the most exhaustive sense of the term. What spiritual or intellectual gift was lacking in him? He had a brilliant and versatile mind. His literary gift has been the world's wonder: philosophy, poetry, theology, rich personal experience, now on the highest heights and now in the deepest depths; rarest sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men, and glowing devotion to God, a vivid vision of Christ, and a penitence which is a spiritual ideal for us all, added to a thankfulness which is equally a spiritual ideal for us all; these are but some of the qualities which make David a glorious and abiding pattern for all who would preach the gospel to the common people. Of Isaiah, who can speak with even an approach to adequacy? His prophetic garments were richly bejewelled. He emits thunder and lightning. His words are often as the balm of Gilead. He searches the conscience as with flames of fire. His tender sympathy often moves us to responsive tears. He could put his soul into the souls of his fellow men. And he so preaches Christ that he is well described as the Old Testament Evangelist. The rushing mighty wind of the Holy Spirit sweeps through his evangelical messages. He foresees the Atoning Saviour with a wondrous prophetic precision. As George Gilfillan quaintly puts it, 'The Cross stands in the

painted window of his style.' No preacher can long err who follows in Isaiah's burning track. Let a preacher be steeped in Isaiah's teaching, and have the Spirit upon him as Isaiah had, and that preacher will be popular, with an august and soul-saving popularity. There is no treatise on preaching which can rival the incomparable prophecy of Isaiah. No preacher can possess the unique kind of inspiration which inflamed Isaiah, but 'the same spirit' can inform all preachers with 'power from on high.'

What shall be said of Jeremiah? He was as evangelical as Isaiah. His passion was a very flame of Jehovah. His tears are proverbial, but his severity should be equally proverbial. No Niobe was he, drowned in tears. He could be 'terrible as an army with banners.' His courage was heroic. His patience was equally heroic. He was as a brazen wall amid scoffing and virulent opposers. He could speak with sovereign power, and he could suffer with unclouded serenity. What a grasp of truth he had! What wonderful aptitude of expression! How he, too, foresaw the Saviour! And what a prophetic grasp he had of the 'New Covenant'! His selflessness is amazing. So long as God was glorified, what cared he! Jeremiah lived and preached in difficult times. He is an everlasting example of Popular Preaching under strenuous conditions.

I would give no better counsel to young preachers than they should spend their days and nights with Jeremiah's prophecies. Our Lord reminded people of Jeremiah, and we may so drink of his spirit that we too may remind people of that consecrated prophet. Be it added, that in some ways, the prophecy of Jeremiah is a guide-book for hearers to this day. See there how to hear the Word of God! And see there how not to hear it! A great book is this evangelical prophecy alike for preachers and for hearers.

We must cast a glance only, where it might well be a protracted study, upon Ezekiel the prophet of flame. What a pattern he is to all who would be the Lord's messengers to the multitude! Did ever a man of God more completely efface selfhood? He was willing to be a fool for the sake of his God and his gospel. Seldom has a preacher had such humiliations as Ezekiel had, and seldom has a man borne them so uncomplainingly. What a torrent of fire his speech oft-times was! And yet he could be winsome in his tenderness, for tenderness is ever an attribute of the true Popular Preacher. Ezekiel's obedience to the will and word of God is awe-inspiring and delightful. He loses his will in the Will Divine. His intellectual qualities, too, are rare and wonderful. What words he uses! What phrases! What dramatization he has! What insight into heavenly things!

What a passion for holiness possesses him ! How surcharged he was with the ' unfolding flame ' of the Holy Spirit ! He was baptized with fire as truly as ever prophet was. We want Ezekiels in the modern pulpit. He is indeed ' a sign ' to all generations of preachers. Be it the happy and remunerative lot of all preachers to study and emulate that God-given sign.

When we come to the New Testament, the record of Popular Preachers becomes bewildering in its labyrinthine redundancy. Popular Preaching is seen clearly to be, what this Lecture has persistently claimed that it is—the supreme agency of Christianity. We cannot tread the labyrinth : we can but mark a point here and there of its wonderful outflowings. Justice has never yet been accorded to Peter as a Popular Preacher. It was at Pentecost he became such, and he never lost the Pentecostal endowment. ' Which things are an allegory ' for all preachers to the consummation of the age. Peter is the eternal illustration of what the Holy Spirit can do for a preacher ; for his intellect, and for his tongue, as well as for his soul. Would a preacher be truly popular, let him address himself to a lifelong study of Peter. I spoke of Peter's intellect and tongue, and what the Holy Spirit did for both. Let us revert for a moment to that subject. Peter gained at Pentecost, and never lost, a rare gift of expression. He became

a Master of Words, whether he spoke or wrote. In some respect his mastery of expression exceeds that of all other New Testament speakers and writers.

Careless, strawy, speakers, who let forth what George Meredith calls ' a rabble vocabulary,' have sometimes sheltered themselves under the supposed example of Peter. But they have had no right to take such shelter. Peter's vocabulary is a study in deft and beautiful language. If Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost be carefully studied it will disclose Peter as an ideal of Popular Preaching. What real and ardent eloquence! What rich expository power! What a subtle logic! What a knowledge of Holy Scripture! What a Christology! What a wrestling with the conscience of his hearers! What courageousness! What home-coming to men's hearts! What devotion to the Cross and to the Resurrection of Christ! What application! And what appeal! Pentecost has left us a wealth of instruction, but it teaches no lesson more powerfully than what are the grand essentials of Popular Preaching.

Wherever you get Petrine and Pentecostal Preaching you have Popular Preaching. Pentecostal Preaching, like the Pentecostal Church, had ' favour with all the people.' And so it ever is. The ' tongue of fire ' awakens a response of fire in the hearers. O let the Church pray without

ceasing for a Pentecostal endowment for all our preachers. Every pulpit gift and grace will thus, and only thus, be secured. Pentecost is the grandest college for the training of preachers. Where the heart of fire is, there is the tongue of fire, and where the tongue of fire is, there is a grand confluence of intellectual and spiritual gifts.

If Pentecost affords a study of Popular Preaching it affords also a study of popular hearing. It is full of admonition as to unbelieving hearing. Dubiety and mockery, and procrastination marked some of the hearers on the Day of Pentecost, and such hearers there will be whilst 'the day of salvation' endures. The Church, and especially the preachers, must always reckon on this, lest they be 'swallowed up with over much sorrow.' But on the Day of Pentecost there was glorious hearing, soul-converting and soul-sanctifying hearing, believing hearing, hearing which redounded to the glory of the Crucified and Risen Saviour. And, blessed be God, the Holy Spirit graciously guarantees such hearing to faithful evangelical preaching long as the day of Gospel-visitation lasts.

Who shall paint a finished picture and a worthy picture of Paul as a Popular Preacher? That miraculous man! 'If, indeed, he were only a man and not the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit,' as certain of the early Fathers speculated. Paul

is surely, after the Saviour-Lord, the model preacher. His traducers dubbed his speech 'contemptible,' but in so doing they registered themselves as 'contemptible.' Is he more wonderful intellectually or spiritually!—who shall say? The reach of his intellect who can accurately measure! His is perhaps the greatest intellect of all history. What sublimities he saw and grasped! What deeps of thought he plumbed! Theologian, philosopher, poet, what was he not? Is he not the greatest interpreter of Christ ever given to the world? Who knew and preached the gospel as he did? His passion for Christ, and especially for the Atoning and Risen and Exalted and Returning Christ, is a wonder of wonders. He is the ideal missionary and the ideal evangelist. His blended culture and fervour make him the King of Preachers. Be Paul the preacher's life-long study. We seem to hear his inspired voice saying, especially to preachers, 'Be ye imitators of me.' And, by grace, we will instantly endeavour so to be. Every preacher may in this regard say without offence, 'I am of Paul.' Preaching modelled after Paul's preaching will win for the preacher a 'crown of rejoicing.'

Down through the long centuries since Bible-times, the history of Popular Preaching is to be traced. We cannot attempt to follow the windings of the affluent river which has ministered life

wherever it has come. Volumes might be written rich in illustrative examples. Many valuable volumes have been written. Already in this Lecture astral names have been cited. What a wonderful history it has been! Sometimes there have been sad eclipses of its brightness. Balaams have prophesied with lovely eloquence, all frustrated by an utterly unlovely life. Popular Preachers have sadly 'erred from the faith.' Like Judas, they have preached attractive sermons and then basely played the traitor's part, and sold their Master for pieces of silver. 'Brethren, pray for us,' all earnest preachers cry, and they do not cry in vain. But, humbly acknowledging these black spots in the radiant record, a gloriously radiant record it still is. We may well give thanks to God on every remembrance of the splendid history.

The recent record of Popular Preaching, taken as a whole, brings no blush to the cheek of him who peruses it. The story of the Popular Preaching of our own Church none can rightly read without thanksgiving to the God who has so graciously ordered all. Such names as John Wesley, Adam Clarke, Samuel Bradburn, Robert Newton, Joseph Beaumont, Morley Punshon, Richard Roberts, Peter Mackenzie, Hugh Price Hughes, fire the blood of such as know their memorable careers.

A chapter might well be written on Popular Preachers who never had their due. We have had many who deserve to be classed as ' unaccredited.' They had much favour, doubtless, with many, but not the recognition their undoubted powers had right to. It would be invidious to adduce names here ; elsewhere I shall not hesitate to adduce them. But it will suffice if here I pay a grateful and appreciative tribute to many a Methodist minister, and to many a Methodist local preacher who rendered right popular service to our Church, and passed to a full reward in heaven, without receiving the reward to which they were entitled upon earth. Long may the noble history of Popular Preaching repeat itself ! A better desire for the Church of God none can cherish, and to turn that desire into prayer must be the ceaseless endeavour of the Church.

Do not let the ministers and lay preachers allow themselves to lose heart, even when they lack the appreciation which they deserve. ' We are doing a great work,' they may confidently believe and boldly assert. The best-hearted of the Church will always put high value upon them, and the Master's commendation will make them glad with tranquil and hopeful gladness. The Church does well to hearten its Popular Preachers, and to encourage all its preachers to seek true Popularity. With the history of Popular Preaching before it,

how can it, how dare it, do otherwise? Again we pray the prayer—may the noble history of Popular Preaching repeat itself. And the prayer will assuredly be answered, and the bright succession will run on 'till the full course of time be past.'

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